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**University of Stirling**  
**Film and Media Studies**

**A taste for excess: disdained and dissident forms of  
fashioning femininity.**

Adele Patrick

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# **Abstract**

**A taste for excess: disdained and dissident forms of fashioning femininity**  
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This thesis examines the meanings of forms of fashioned femininity in Britain in the post-war period. Drawing on a range of popular, academic and media texts, the widespread social, political and cultural disdain for the feminised decorative is defined and discussed.

Modernist rhetoric and taste, the championing of design austerity, masculinity, bohemianism and appropriations of functional working-class fashionings are shown to be linked to the emergent tastes of Second-Wave feminism. In contrast, fashionings associated with working class and other disdained communities of women, defined here as 'feminine excess', whether in hair, make-up, jewellery or dress is shown to be demonised across historical and contemporary contexts by the arbiters of taste, expressed in key Modernist and feminist texts. Whereas both Modernism and facets of feminism are viewed as occluding and repudiating cultures and forms of working-class femininity, the emergence of queer theories and the rise of camp in popular culture is also critiqued here as ultimately confining discussions of and approbation for fashioned feminine excess to within the ironic discourse of drag.

In the absence of research on, in particular working -class women's experiences and dis/pleasures in fashioning femininity, empirical data from female participants discussing their own histories of and tastes in fashioning is analysed alongside memory-work findings. Participants' contributions are discussed in two key chapters that focus on the significance of forms of identification in the self-fashioning of excess, specifically the iconic, excessive model of Dusty Springfield for women and girls growing up in Britain in the 1960s and, secondly, the complex array of meanings of hair and hair fashioning in constructing feminine and feminist selves. Throughout both the significance



of class, notions of cultural difference, glamour and other pleasures in the processes of fashioning femininity.

In a further chapter an array of media texts are analysed alongside insights generated by research participants focussing on the trope of jewels and jewellery. Desires for, pleasures in and identifications with female stars and Royals through their fashioning of glittering models of excess are charted across an array of popular texts consumed by communities of girls and women. Self-conscious, middle-class tastes for dissident fashionings and ironic appropriations of working-class excesses exemplified in punk or trailer trash vogues are compared to the non-ironic dissidence of Royal Taste, a form of feminine excess exemplified by stars such as Elizabeth Taylor and Shirley Bassey who, it is argued, have usurped the Royal aura in the post war period symbolised in their excessive will to adorn.

This thesis concludes with a reflection on the obduracy of discriminatory trashing of working class forms of fashioning femininity and the consequences of this in terms of cultural justice. The hegemony of Modernist taste in paradoxically subordinating and appropriating otherness is critiqued alongside feminist neglect of the productive processes and loci of fashioning. This thesis calls for a re-evaluation of the existing institutional, modernist and feminist demonising of the other, excessive woman, highlights the constructedness of all fashioning and details the cultural value of disdained women's fashioning regimes and tastes.

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis is a personal and political project. My motivations for examining forms of fashioned femininity are rooted in an acknowledgement of the constructedness of my own and others' histories of self-fashioning, dissatisfactions with the limitations of the literature on this topic for teaching and research purposes, and a desire to contribute empirical perspectives to the research on femininity and feminism, for example on working-class, feminist and lesbian patterns of consumption. Before summarising my main aims, and accounting for my perspective and methodology, I have sketched some of the more compelling questions, gaps and tensions in the field and the literature that prompted my initial enquiries.

## Femininity: an under-researched territory

Katherine Stern has interpreted as mainstream and 'feminist neglect' the lack of debate on fashioning forms of femininity: "*There is no comprehensive account of the aesthetic category, no analysis of the details that characterise femininity*" (Stern, 1997, p184). Empirical accounts of either feminine excess or so-called feminist fashioning are negligible.<sup>1</sup> Second-Wave feminist literature on fashioning femininity is paradoxically expansive *and* fugitive; an anti-fashioning rhetoric formed the core of the germinal Women's Liberation Movement and yet few writers and activists codified the specificity of in/appropriate fashionings.

The landscape for research on and theories of femininity in the late 1990s suggested that this was a territory virtually relinquished to transvestism. The proscriptiveness of early Second-Wave discussions on femininity and the subsequent repudiation of feminine excess, notwithstanding the polemical feminist debates and conflicted standpoints on the politics of butch and femme, had left discussions of femininity to queer commentators extrapolating the political agency of drag.<sup>2</sup> Feminist repudiation of fashioning femininity and gay male appropriation appeared to have erased forms of

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<sup>1</sup> This point is developed in the Literature Review. In most instances this thesis is discussing femininity as a form of fashioning. Skeggs notes that, "*The appearance of femininity i.e. the labour of looking feminine, can also be distinguished from the labour of feminine characteristics, such as caring, supporting, passivity and non assertiveness, although the two are merged in the term 'femininity'*" (Skeggs, 2001, p. 297). Beverley Skeggs' *Formations* research (2001a, 2001b) has usefully contributed to recent feminist debates on femininity. 'Feminine excess' is a phrase I used throughout this thesis to define forms of femininity that rely on cosmetic acts that exaggerate conventions of feminine fashioning, for example, ornately or exaggeratedly fashioned hair, jewellery and make-up use. At points this idea is expanded to include elaborately feminised gestures, costuming and voice. Fashioning is inextricably linked to but not synonymous with fashion. For example, I discuss the idea of fashion inertia where individuals or groups appear resistant to the impact of the promotion of fashion and beauty industries.



feminine excess coined and expressed by *women*, forms I remembered pleurably fashioning, identifying with and consuming. These memories and observations were frequently what I would describe as classed or Black or minority ethnic forms of fashioning.<sup>3</sup> Commenting on the class and raced dimension to the queered landscape of femininity in the 1990s Tyler claimed,

A real woman is a real lady; otherwise she is a female impersonator, a camp or a mimic whose 'unnaturally' bad taste – like that of the working-class, ethnic or racially 'other' woman – marks the impression as such. Miming the feminine means impersonating a white middle-class impersonation of an 'other' ideal of femininity (ibid. p57).<sup>4</sup>

Feminist disinterest and the camp hegemony has left constituencies of women who chose/choose to ingenuously fashion to excess without irony paradoxically neglected and exploited as I discuss in 'Queening It'.<sup>5</sup>

Further epistemological gaps and tensions motivated this project. Notwithstanding the unfashionability of research on fashioning a strain of queer influenced work on so-called body modification proliferated coincident with the research period. I found the academic and media interest in this field strikingly contrasted with the neglect of the modified body's 'common' correlate, the excessive jewellery fashionings visible in many working-class and black and minority ethnic communities.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, concomitant with the literature review, I became increasingly aware of the

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<sup>2</sup> Indicating the scope of the queered cultural hegemony Tyler claimed in 1991 that "*not only femininity but even macho masculinity is read as camp, and therefore, radical*" (Tyler, 1991, p. 33).

<sup>3</sup> I use the problematic terms working class and middle class variously to designate economic status and, more routinely, a disposition in relation to cultural capital and specific structuring habitus'. Skeggs has discussed how the "*working class came into effect through middle class conceptualisations*" (Skeggs, 2001, p. 4) enabled by Enlightenment technologies and that it was women "*who were predominantly observed*" (ibid. p. 5). Significantly "*Observation and interpretation of the sexual behaviour of working-class women on the basis of their appearance was central to the production of [these] middle-class conceptualisations*" (ibid.). This notion is acutely reflected in the last chapter of this thesis. I have also drawn on the productive analysis of class (identifications) determined by Bourdieu, 1979, Walkerdine, 1997, and Painter amongst others. The paradoxical mutability and recalcitrance of class identifications were rehearsed specifically by some participants including Michelle and Sandy:

Michelle: I think it's hard saying that about class because we've got a middle-class lifestyle but we're all socialists and communists so [...] I mean I think it just sounds dead naff if you say I've got a pure working-class identity, because I'm obviously middle class now, but I don't think I've got middle-class values. How do you define class? I mean I think class is still important, I don't think it's something that we shouldn't be looking at. I think it's still as important.

<sup>4</sup> The elision of working-class white and minority ethnic fashioning in this comment is a theme returned to later in this thesis. Despite the rise of identity politics in the last decades of the twentieth century, and the expansion of Black British populations in British urban contexts significantly in the post-war period, literature is scarce that accounts for cross-ethnic identifications in forms of fashioning.

<sup>5</sup> Skeggs has stated "*when femininity is played straight, that is when it is not camped up or disavowed, it is seen to constitute a capitulation, a swamp, something maternal, ensnared or ensnaring*" (Biddy Martin quoted in Skeggs, 2001, p. 300).

<sup>6</sup> The visibility of modified, mainly young, bodies on the streets of Glasgow increased over the research period. In West End areas, for example in bohemian/academic zones, modifications appeared to be illustrative of the styles and forms discussed in academic, alternative and art texts. In the Glasgow University campus and the environs of Glasgow School of Art I noted ethnic tattooing, nose, lip, tongue, navel and eyebrow piercings, ear lobe stretching, corseting etc. In contrast 'body modifications' evident in Glasgow's East End and in other less affluent areas, in particular the widespread use of multiple bangles, rings and ear piercings were not represented within the new literature or at related conferences. The Style conference in Bowling Green, Ohio, 1997, captured the *zeitgeist*. MacKendrick and Braunberger discussed tattooing and corseting respectively focussing



development; influenced by post modernity and the queer turn in popular culture of the paradoxical disdain/fashionability of so-called trailer trash fashions. This vogue appeared to reiterate the notion of (mythologised) working-class fashioning to excess as worthy of attention solely for parodic, ironic and deconstructive purposes.

The tensions outlined above, between feminist and queer standpoints and perspectives, and notions of classed fashionings were conflicted by my own autobiography or stories of experiencing academia, feminism and self-fashioning.<sup>7</sup> My self-fashioning history represents a bifurcation of dispositions, rooted in a working-class habitus and (re) constructed in adulthood in an intensely visual self-consciously, fashioned, middle-class milieu.<sup>8</sup> My increasing engagement with feminist politics and activism from at least 1986 produced a further array of (fashioning) identifications and reconstructions. Memory work undertaken for this thesis rehearsed episodes of learning to 'pass' in middle-class contexts that entailed bodily, linguistic and psychological tensions.<sup>9</sup> I also acknowledged classed tensions in the distinct communities I inhabited prior to and throughout the research process; as a student and lecturer at the Glasgow School of Art, my first exposure to University cultures at the start of this research project, in feminist groups and the women's project that I helped to co-ordinate, at academic conferences I attended and the block of council flats I lived in whilst a lecturer and a doctoral student. In all these contexts I was made aware that "*the body and bodily dispositions [carried] the markers of social class*" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 82).<sup>10</sup>

## Fashioned bodies in urban contexts

In the broader field of Glasgow I was aware of classed zones of consumption and fashioning and the distribution of distinctly fashioned bodies in the urban environment. During the research period I travelled frequently on foot, between workplaces, at the Glasgow School of Art in bohemian

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autobiographically on their 'academic' bodies' modifications which they interpreted as assaults on the academy's expectations of 'docile bodies' (MacKendrick, 1997; Braunberger, 1997). Only one broader empirical study was presented, Waggoner and O'Brien's research on how white feminist academics develop strategies for asserting agency in institutions through their fashioning (Waggoner and O'Brien, 1997 see also, Patrick, 1998, pp. 32-33). There were no papers on classed and/or vernacular body modifications.

<sup>7</sup> Walkerdine (1997), Skeggs (2001), Stanley (1995), Plummer (2000) and others have demonstrated how working-class identities may be subject to internalised conflict even on the journey to academia: "*The very possibility of success depend[s] upon a physical, social and psychological split [leaving] women with 'the conviction that they don't fit'*" (Plummer, 2000, p. x).

<sup>8</sup> From 1997 I attended Glasgow School of Art as an Embroidered and Woven Textiles student, subsequently undertaking an MA in Design and co-founding the Glasgow-based design company Graven Images.

<sup>9</sup> I discuss the significance of memory work as a methodology used in this thesis later in this introduction.

Bourdieu's term habitus, defines the "*systems of dispositions characteristic of the different classes*" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 6). It is a "*structured and structuring structure*." (ibid. p. 171) specifically in the interrelation of production and appreciation of classifiable judgements in which "*the space of lifestyles is constituted*" (ibid p. 170).

<sup>10</sup> Other commentators have discussed tensions in terms of femininity versus feminism or Modernism, for example, Hilary Fawcett has acknowledged that growing up, a lower middle-class product of the baby boom in Sunderland in the 1960s her "*love of [Modernist] fashion was part of the tension between the achieving me and traditionally feminine me*" (Fawcett, 2002, p. 122).





1. Independent jewellers, Gallowgate and Trongate, Glasgow, June 2003  
Photos: Adele Patrick.





Garnethill in the West End to the Women's Library in economically and architecturally neglected Trongate in the East End.<sup>11</sup> I began to consciously observe and note this as a movement from an environment where ironic, (self-) consciously idiosyncratic fashion excesses prevailed, authored and authorised by the proximity of the School of Art, through city centre fashion orthodoxy to the increasingly gentrified Buchanan Street /Merchant City, and finally to the tourist free edges of the city where unnameable, elusive but undeniably excessive forms of fashioning predominated.<sup>12</sup> I found little in the feminist or mainstream canon that could illuminate and offer productive analyses of the tensions between class, forms of fashioning and issues of *taste* that clearly defined these differences in 'embodied capital' (Skeggs, 2001, p.10). Working part-time with groups of mainly middle-class (women) students at Glasgow School of Art, and part-time with the mainly working-class women using the Women's Library (and the women who consciously fashioned themselves as feminists identified in both) raised my awareness of these structuring and structured discrete habitus.<sup>13</sup>

Gaining deeper understanding of my own and other women's experiences of desiring and performing excessive femininity (the most pathologised of the forms of femininity, for both mainstream and feminist commentators and in social and cultural contexts as I intend to demonstrate) seemed an urgent project, a way of addressing specifically an array of unanswered questions, tensions, gaps and fissures in feminist knowledge.

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<sup>11</sup> Now in the process of rapid gentrification.

<sup>12</sup> Forms of fashioning prevailing on the street often reflected the retailing of, for example, jewellery in respective zones. I noted that in Garnethill, Glasgow School of Art's annual Jewellery Department sale is only for the cognoscenti (being advertised internally) and their in-house upmarket shop (installed post 1990) sells expensive graduate pieces. Nearby Sauchiehall Street, a key tourist zone was awash with 'Mockintosh' including Mackintosh's Miss Cranston's tearoom that now houses a tourist-oriented jeweller.

Buchanan Street and environs is gentrified, upmarket and tourist-friendly. A 'designer jeweller' is located in Princes Square the most salubrious city centre mall, and adjacent Argyle Arcade is devoted to a mixture of high to middle market jewellers. A branch of 'Accessorize' nearby sells ethnic influenced and fashion jewellery items, aimed at a high-income youth market. The Merchant City, the 'jewel in the crown' of Glasgow's cultural and commercial makeover is home to The Italian Centre, (Versace glitz, Ralph Lauren 'stealth wealth' and Giorgio Armani) and on nearby Wilson Street, ORRO is the cities' most exclusive, contemporary designer jewellers. Another branch, with in-store jeweller on display, can be found in the West End a stone's throw from University of Glasgow.

In contrast, Argyle Street/Trongate at the edge of the Merchant city has a host of sub-'Ratners', independent, 'budget' gold shops and pawnshops showcasing similar products. These stores proliferate from Argyle Street towards Glasgow's East End and by Trongate and around and beyond the Barras Market a rash of independent jewellers can be found, some only open on market days, selling the jewellery visible on the streets worn by many men and women in the city's East End. These products are not advertised. Some shops offer to design and/or customise items. A memo recording one visit noted that a customer offered to bring in his own gold to be made into a two-fingered 'Dukie', to reduce the price.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu has established a theoretical link between notions of taste and class: "*Taste is thus the source of the system of distinctive features which cannot fail to be perceived as the systematic expression of a particular class of conditions of existence i.e. as a distinctive lifestyle, by anyone who possesses practical knowledge of the relationships between distinctive signs and positions in the distributions – between the universe of objective properties, which is brought to light by scientific construction and the no less objective universe of lifestyles, which exist as such for and through ordinary experience.*" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 175).



## 2 Literature Review

### Femininity

#### Early second-wave feminist positions on fashioning femininity

I shall not allure you with dangling ornaments  
Nor entice you with painted face  
Nor dazzle you with natty garments  
I shall not please you with a veneer belying my thoughts  
No, I shall not come to you cloaked in false beauty  
only to disillusion you later  
I shall come bald.

(Janet Russo, *Women: A Journal of Women's Liberation*, 1970)

In the proliferation of feminist publishing, actions and artworks in the United States and in Britain following the resurgence of feminism in the late 1960s, forms of fashioned femininity were iconoclastically and literally trashed. In a revolutionary move, the fashioning of femininity became unequivocally political. In subsequent decades, a reductive reading of fashioning femininity would be contested from within and outside feminist scholarship, nevertheless, a resilient paradigm had been established early in the Second-Wave. Excessive or cosmetic forms of fashioning femininity were seen by feminist writers to variously connote: the (patriarchal) subjugation of women through representations of fashioned femininity in advertising and in broader cultural contexts (Florika, 1970; Rich, 1980) the erasure of difference in the normalisation of the 'made-up' woman (Dworkin, 1974; MacKinnon, 1982) the sexualisation and objectification of women through cosmetic acts for the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975; Brownmiller, 1984; Rich, 1990) alienation (Daly, 1978; Bartky, 1990) a political weapon against women (Chapkis, 1988; Wolf, 1990; Faludi, 1992) the internalisation of psychoanalytic 'lack' and the *a priori* evidence of false consciousness (Friedan, 1963; Dworkin, 1974; Mulvey, 1975; Greer, 1981; Cottingham, 1999)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Bordo (1995) has noted that in mainstream theory the role of feminism in developing a political understanding of the body is rarely acknowledged (Bordo, 1995, p. 16). Critiquing the tendency to omit feminist thinking from work on the body from Marx to Foucault, Bordo argues that there has been neglect of 'personal politics' as an intellectual paradigm, and in particular "to the new understanding of the body that 'personal politics' ushered in" (ibid. p. 17).



The Second-Wave identity 'feminist' was "*predicated on a rejection of femininity*" (Hollows, 2000, p. 1).<sup>2</sup> For many feminist writers and activists fashioning femininity was not indicted as being a superficial distraction to women engaged in feminist work, on the contrary, it was seen as injurious to Liberation itself, connoting oppression, bracketed with and/or evidence of violence against women by men.<sup>3</sup>

The phrase 'the personal is political'<sup>4</sup> sanctioned and galvanised militancy in formally discrete private and public realms. The refusal of the so-called tyranny of specific cosmetic acts (enacted in the home) were ideologically linked to more collective forms of militancy (in the streets). Politicising such formally trivial/ised aspects of women's lives was informed by the collective disclosure and analysis of shared oppression in Consciousness Raising (CR) groups that operated in the Movement from the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> But early Second-Wave feminist analysis and literature on fashioning femininity was paradoxically expansive *and* fugitive. Despite widespread adoption of an anti-femininity rhetoric, few writers and activists codified the specificity of in/appropriate fashionings. Actions against forms of fashioned femininity were more often a trashing of caricatures, of an unnamed Other, a Stereotype of the Eternal Feminine (Greer, 1981, p. 58) or homogenised Beauty Queens.<sup>6</sup> Some later commentators have argued that this is evidence of early campaigners' desire to avoid demonising women involved in cosmetic acts or beauty pageants. Bordo has stated that, "*the critique presented at that demonstration [No More Miss America] was far from [a] theoretically crude, essentialising program*" (Bordo 1995, p. 19).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Exhortations against fashioning femininity can be found in the genealogy of texts of Women's Liberation, from materialist, cultural, socialist, radical, Marxist and lesbian feminist perspectives; indeed, many commentators have routinely cited the germinal action for Second-Wave feminism as being the trashing of Miss America (Watson and Martin, 2000, Kramarae and Treichler 1985, Cottingham, 1999) This triggered years of copycat actions by feminists across the world. Arguably the earliest demonstration in Britain, in 1969 occurred at the Festival of London Stores where Miss Nelbarden Swimwear was appearing, it was reported in the July issue of *Shrew*. An early account of the Miss World demonstration appeared in the Nov/Dec issue, 1969

<sup>3</sup> Defining the eight characteristics of male power (following an essay by Kathleen Gough) in her pamphlet *Compulsory Heterosexuality and lesbian existence*, Adrienne Rich interpreted 'feminine dress codes' thus: "5. to confine them physically and prevent their movement by means of rape as terrorism, keeping women off the streets; purdah; footbinding; atrophying of women's athletic capabilities; haute couture, "feminine" dress codes; the veil, sexual harassment on the streets; horizontal segregation of women in employment; prescriptions for "full time" mothering; enforced economic dependence of wives." (Rich, undated pamphlet, p. 11) For Catherine MacKinnon femininity was inextricably linked to men's sexual dominance over women, thus, "*Femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms*" (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 183).

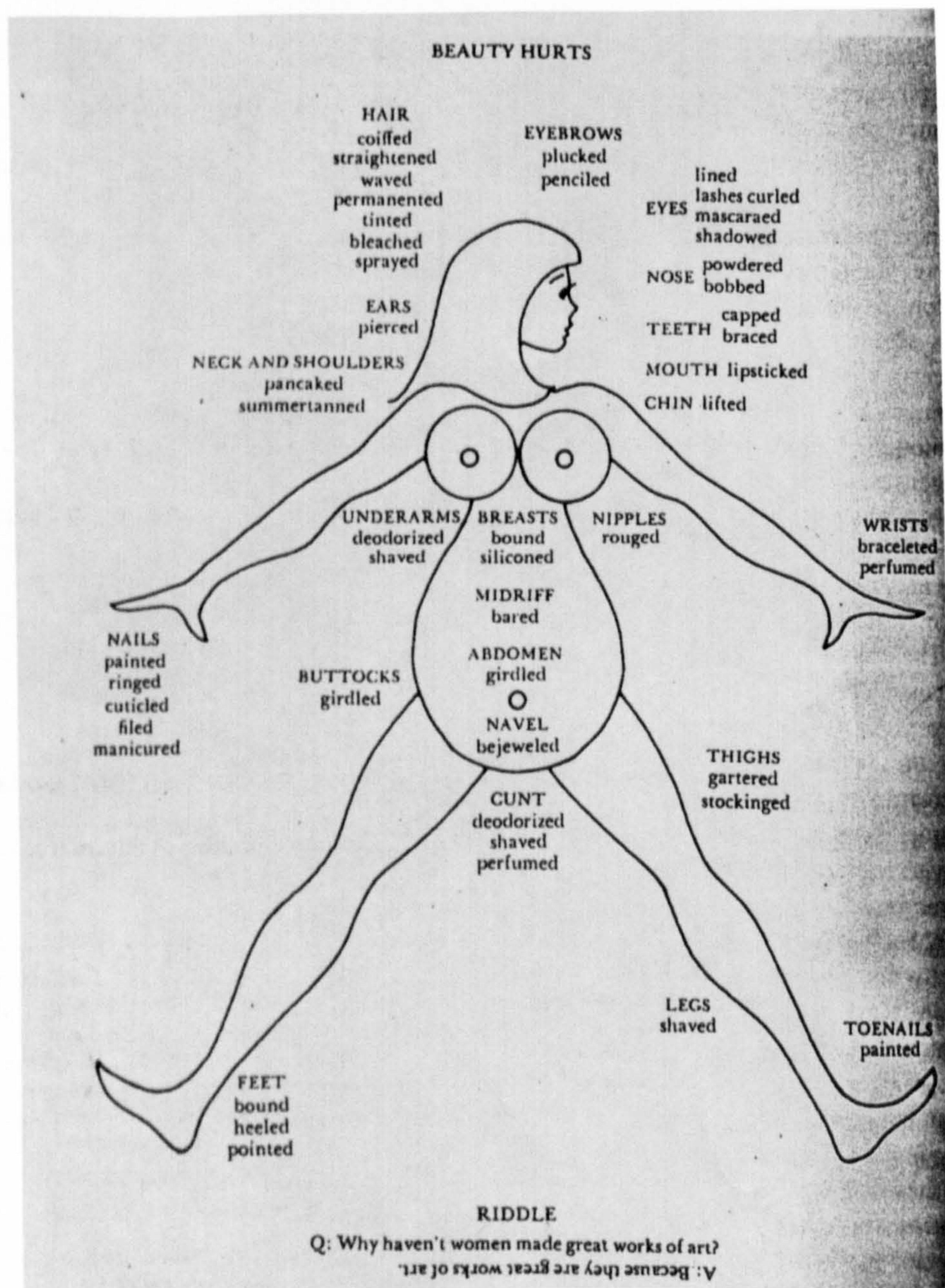
<sup>4</sup> Coined by Carol Hanisch and published in *Notes from the second year* (1970) see Humm, 1989, p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> In her introduction to *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970) Robin Morgan testified that, "*During the past year I... was arrested on a militant women's liberation action, spent some time in jail, stopped wearing makeup and shaving my legs, started to learn karate and changed my politics completely. That is, I became, somewhere along the way a 'feminist' committed to Women's Revolution.*" (Morgan, 1970, p. xvi) In 1976, Sandra Lee Bartky used this quote to infer, in her article 'Toward a phenomenology of feminist consciousness,' how a rejection of fashioned femininity was a prerequisite, or sign of raised consciousness. "...*these changes in behaviour go hand in hand with changes in consciousness: to become a feminist is to develop a radically altered consciousness of oneself, of others... Feminists themselves have a name for the struggle to clarify and hold fast to this way of apprehending things: They call it 'consciousness raising'*" (Bartky, 1990, p. 12).

<sup>6</sup> For example, 'The Degrading Mindless-Boob-Girlie Symbol' from the 10 points of protest at the No More Miss America demonstration, cited in Morgan, op.cit. (1970, p. 586).

<sup>7</sup> Others involved in the actions, including Hanisch have contested this. She claimed, "*One of the biggest mistakes of the whole*





2. Diagram demonstrating 'Beauty hurts' in Andrea Dworkin, *Woman-Hating*, 1974, page 117.



Andrea Dworkin was alone in her attempt to codify the 'hurt' inherent in fashioning femininity, (Dworkin, 1974, p. 117) but charges against specific women were seldom levelled in feminist literature or 'zap actions'. However, the development of a phenomenological interpretation of cosmetic acts is evident in feminist analyses of fashioned femininity forming a trajectory from early Second-Wave to contemporary publications and debates.<sup>8</sup> Although precise prohibitions are avoided, Second-Wave texts articulated binary oppositions between good/bad, feminist/counter-revolutionary, false/authentic forms of appearance.<sup>9</sup>

In Britain, the 'popularisation' of feminism was heralded by the publication in 1970 of Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, whose thesis rested on its indictment of women's historical preoccupation with the 'idiotic ritual' of cosmetic acts.<sup>10</sup> Such identifications, unconsciously rehearsed the notion in both mainstream and feminist cultures of fashioning as a differentiating marker, (in complex ways but indubitably on the grounds of class), between thinking women and feminine women.<sup>11</sup>

The imposed mask of femininity versus a liberated image of womanhood is a paradigm in early Second-Wave polemics, activism and art and was inherent in the formulation of alternative

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[anti-] pageant [action] was our anti-womanism... posters which read 'Up Against the Wall, Miss America', 'Miss America Sells it,' and 'Miss America is a Big Falsie,' hardly raised any woman's consciousness and really harmed the cause of sisterhood. Miss America and all beautiful women came off as our enemy instead of our sisters that suffer with us... [...] also crowning a live sheep Miss America sort of said that beautiful women are sheep" (Hanisch, 1968, in Kramarae and Treichler 1985, pp. 276-277). Watson and Martin have also noted, "As the pageant entered the 1970s the controversies continued. Miss America 1972, Laurel Shaefer was burned in effigy by radical feminists as she toured various cities during her reign. She received threats on her as well" (Watson and Martin, 2000, p. 111).

<sup>8</sup> For example a session on Third-Wave Femininity was included at the Third Wave Feminism conference, Exeter University, July, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> In flyers calling for 'No More Miss America' in August 1968 activists stated: "There will be Picket Lines; Guerrilla Theatre; Leafleting; Lobbying Visits to the contestants urging our sisters to reject the Pageant Farce and join us; a huge Freedom Trash Can (in which we will throw bras, girdles, curlers, false eyelashes, wigs, and representative issues of *Cosmopolitan*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Family Circle* etc. – bring any such woman-garbage you have around the house)" (Morgan, 1970, p. 585).

<sup>10</sup> Greer embodied herself in the text as a template for New Womanhood: "I am sick of peering at the world through false eyelashes, so everything I see is mixed up with a shadow of bought hairs; I'm sick of weighting my head with a dead mane... I'm sick of the Powder Room" (Greer, 1981, p. 61). Fashioning a feminist identity however elusive a concept was cast as a more intellectually developed correlate to the infantile excess of fashioned femininity.

<sup>11</sup> The eighteenth century Bluestocking connoted an "unfeminine and pretentious woman" (Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 77). The myth endures that in the precursors to the 'salons', gatherings for intellectual conversation, the term was first used in 1750s after a vogue for blue stockings was initiated by one of the people attending wore blue worsted instead of black silk stockings. Originating as a term to denote "informal or homely dress", it quickly came to refer to "intellectual, literary or learned women" (ibid. p. 77). In the late 1960s, The Redstockings "the most strongly verbalised pro-women line of all the [early Second Wave US feminist] groups" (Celestine Ware, cited in Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 388) invoked the historical connection between fashioning/feminism and anti-femininity. The name, coined by Shulamith Firestone in 1969 was intended "to represent a synthesis of two traditions: that of the earlier feminist theoreticians and writers who where insultingly called Bluestockings in the nineteenth century and the militant political tradition of radicals – the red of revolution" (Sarachild, cited in Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 387). In her discussion of the Danish Redstocking Movement, (1970-1985) Lynn Walter raised a range of illuminating points, following Bourdieu. The movement resembled their American and British counterparts; Consciousness Raising (or 'basis' groups) and 'actions' were used to confront patriarchy (and capitalism) and women's subjection to a "societal beauty contest". Their first action was to parade in a public place in 'sexy apparel' and, on reaching the town hall, threw wigs, bras and false eyelashes in the trash (Walter, 1990, p. 108). Walter interprets the Movement's motivation to 'embody ugliness' as, in part, a rebellion "against the habitus of middle-class femininity". She argues that the young students' who initiated the movement championing of 'ugliness' could be attributed to economic position and generation, that is: being relatively privileged they had options for careers and could choose to have children without the support of a man; "they were young enough to be attractive to 'their' man no matter how 'ugly' they may dress" (Walter, 1990, p. 114).



epistemologies.<sup>12</sup> By 1989, feminist positions on fashioning femininity had become so over-determined through the distorting lens of a largely hostile mainstream media that Hilary Radner could remark, “*Popular wisdom would seem to suggest that to accept feminism is somehow to relinquish femininity*” (Radner, 1989, p. 319).

In an attempt to stem revisionism in this field, Bordo reviewed feminist writings against sexist ideology in the early Second Wave and concluded that rather than men’s desires and capitalist patriarchy being construed as determining feminine forms of fashioning, women themselves were indicted as, “*responsible for their sufferings from the whims and bodily tyrannies of fashion*” (Bordo, 1995, p. 22).<sup>13</sup> The feminist anti-theses then contested that women were the ‘done to’ not the ‘doer’, that fashion connoted self-inflicted bondage. Bordo interprets this as, “*a crucial historical moment in the developing articulation of a new understanding of the sexual politics of the body*” (ibid. p. 23).

#### **‘Beyond the Oppressor/Oppressed model’: expanding feminist knowledge on femininity**

Feminists are widely regarded as enemies of the family; we are also seen as enemies of the stiletto heel and the beauty parlour, in a word, as enemies of glamour. Hostility on the part of some women to feminism may have its origin here (Bartky, cited in Gaines 1990, p. 3).

Bordo demonstrated that by the 1980s the reductive paradigm, men are powerful and women are powerless, proved an inadequate one in the face of a matrix of criticisms (Bordo, 1995, p. 23). Increasingly, demands were made for constructing theory that would account for the experiences of women from different class and ethnic backgrounds. Others argued against feminist depictions of women as passive and lacking in agency, either in their collusion with or resistance to patriarchy.<sup>14</sup> From the 1970s, feminist ideas had begun to percolate through US and British academic institutions. The development of post-structuralism, feminist film theory and (feminist) cultural studies enabled a

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<sup>12</sup> For example the polemics of WITCH. Covens sprang from a group inaugurated on Halloween 1968. The New York coven stated “*WITCH lives and laughs in every woman. She is the free part of each of us, beneath the shy smiles, the acquiescence to absurd male domination, the make-up or flesh suffocating clothing our sick society demands*” (WITCH, 1970, pp. 605-606). Morgan expressed how the euphoric rejection of, the so-called cult of femininity promised revolutionary changes and an authenticity to the personal and political lives of feminists: “*The death of the concept of Miss America at Atlantic city (which was celebrated by a candlelit funeral dance on the boardwalk at midnight) was only the beginning. A sisterhood of free women is giving birth to a new life-style, and the throes of its labour are authentic stages in the Revolution*” (Morgan, 1970, p. 78).

<sup>13</sup> Even in matters of extreme body modification, “*she [was found to be] her own worst enemy*” (ibid.).

<sup>14</sup> A somewhat uncomfortable anti-Second -Wave alliance was forged between a defensive academia and the feminist critics of the early polemics. ‘Old Feminism’ was critiqued “*for its, ‘lack of textual sophistication – In general, the ‘old’ feminist discourse is seen as having constructed an insufficiently textured, undiscerningly dualistic, overly pessimistic (if not paranoid) view of the politics of the body*” (ibid.).



more theoretically sophisticated notion of patriarchal (and capitalist) power to be articulated, sustaining, and arguably institutionalising forms of the women's movement within academia. This work did much to problematise the earlier movement's totalising concept of (oppressive) male power and (oppressed) female passivity and gave rise to the notion of 'the politics of women's pleasures'.<sup>15</sup> Some feminists working in cultural studies, notably Angela McRobbie (for example, 1991) influenced by Althusserian theories of ideology and Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony, embarked on analyses of individual media texts, significantly the girls magazine, *Jackie*.<sup>16</sup> In this germinal text, the relationship of girls and women to an oppressive notion of fashioning is ideologically apparent. McRobbie found it almost impossible to imagine any modes of resistance available for readers against the totalising frame of heterosexual romance foregrounded in *Jackie*.<sup>17</sup>

In the wider frame, feminist campaigners were finding such approaches, allied to 'Images of Women' criticism useful in indicting pornographic media and other texts that 'objectified women'<sup>18</sup> (CCCS Women's Studies Group 1978, Dworkin, 1981, MacKinnon, 1982). The notion of women's objectification in man-made representations was disseminated at a so-called grass roots as well as academic level through debates, demonstrations and actions as well as forming iconographic and iconoclastic images used on postcards, posters, placards, graffiti, button badges, T-shirts and other paraphernalia, in artworks and via British publications such as *Spare Rib*. However, the 'transmission view of communication' began to be subject to criticisms within academia to the extent that by 1994, van Zoonen, in *Feminist Media Studies*, conceded that "*the academic study of mass communication is in the middle of a paradigm shift involving a movement towards perspectives in which meaning is understood as constructed out of historically and socially situated negotiation between institutional producers of meaning and audiences as producers of meaning*" (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 27).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Although cultural studies had Marxist and left political roots and was linked to non-academic progressive political groups the relationship between those feminists who acknowledged women's pleasures in the consumption of popular culture and the residual political aims of feminism became a classic issue in feminist media theory (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 6).

<sup>16</sup> McRobbie critiqued the text, using semiology, on the basis of the anti-unionism and capitalist entrepreneurship of the publisher, and the coercion of the readers of to comply with the wishes of the dominant order, *Jackie* was "*merely a mouthpiece for ruling class ideology, focused on young adolescent girls*" (McRobbie, 1991, p. 85).

<sup>17</sup> In a later essay, '*Jackie and Just Seventeen in the 1980s*' McRobbie critiqued her earlier approach as an inflexible one where readers were interpreted as 'imprisoned' by the text and where their own construction and uses of the magazine were neglected (McRobbie, 1991, p. 135-188). Significantly, she identified fashion, cosmetics and beauty as a central code in the relationship of power interpellated from the text by adolescent girls. The other three being: the code of romance, the code of personal/domestic life and the code of pop music (ibid. p. 93).

<sup>18</sup> This method was used by early Second -Wave writers including Kate Millett (1970). In *Sexual Politics* she critiqued the work of male writers in their mis/representation of women in literature. These methods were also used in feminist art and film criticism. Gaines has critiqued "*the slightly prudish overtones*" of these interpretations "*and the all too easy confusion of cinema [and art and literature] with pornography*" (Gaines, 1990, p. 7).

<sup>19</sup> Evaluating Ien Ang's work *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (1985) commentators have highlighted two significant innovations, firstly, the focus for her study are female viewers of an escapist TV soap, and she offered a *redemptive reading* of both. Ang and Stacey, began to move the debate further by 'confessing', to consuming and taking pleasure in popular culture themselves.



### Further dichotomies: Film Studies/Cultural Studies, text/context

This section addresses what has been interpreted as a turn towards an analysis of audience from an absorption in the textual. For many commentators this represented a progressive feminist response to a dichotomous feminist methodological impasse, “*from determinist explanations of women’s subordination, by among other factors, mass media [...] to a focus on processes of symbolisation and representation*” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 107).

From the 1970s, Film Studies became the pre-eminent discipline within which feminists examined the area of female dis/pleasures in spectatorship, but research on female audiences, readers and consumers has only begun to be rigorously theorised in the last decade. A methodological bifurcation prevailed in early Second-Wave feminist knowledge that served to inhibit a thorough analysis of female viewing pleasures. Van Zoonen and Stacey have described the early feminist work on spectatorship and gender as taking place in two key disciplines with remote and/or contested methodological positions.<sup>20</sup> For Stacey (1994), film studies research on audience pleasures ultimately revealed a pessimistic, passive model of female spectatorship, whereas cultural studies research interpreted the pleasures for audiences in media as active and, in particular accounts, resistant.<sup>21</sup> Although Laura Mulvey’s work was embraced by feminists in that it theorised the centrality of gender in the production of meaning in the cinema, and has thus been viewed as ‘an inaugural moment’ for the study of the female viewer (Brunsdon, 1991, p. 370) it is unequivocally a refutation of the possibility of pleasure for the female audience.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, Stacey’s methodological approach in *Stargazing* to the accounts of female filmgoers was to read them in line with a widespread turn to post-structuralism as ‘contextualised texts’ (Stacey, 1994, p. 76). She rejected the textual/empirical dichotomy in her criticism of a rigidly psychoanalytic approach and heralded a new departure in cross-disciplinary research.<sup>23</sup> Such ethnographic feminist work began to reverse the question, ‘What does media do to women?’

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<sup>20</sup> Stacey has argued that film studies privileged the text, the latter context; cultural studies evolved an empirical epistemology, film studies was pro-psychoanalytic and anti-empiricist; cultural studies was derided for its atheoretical claims to reveal demonstrable truths, whereas the shortcomings of a wholly psychoanalytic asocial, ahistorical interpretation of spectators has been rigorously critiqued by researchers in cultural studies.

<sup>21</sup> Above all, film studies work on female spectatorship had historically been distinct from cultural studies in that the ‘real’ audience had not been the focus for research. So much so that it is somewhat ironic that the paradigmatic text for feminists in film studies by Laura Mulvey (1975), *Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema* interrogated *pleasure* in cinema.

<sup>22</sup> Mulvey’s contention was that pleasures for the female spectator were absolutely contingent in that, the only two possible spectator positions were either ‘masculine’ or ‘hypothetical’. This approach, where the spectator was a concept and not a person necessarily foreclosed discussion on the pleasures of female audiences: indeed Gamman and others have accused Mulvey of Puritanism (Gamman, 1988, p. 28). Later feminist interdisciplinary research came to read the Mulveyian perspective as a monolithic orthodoxy (Stacey, 1994, p. 12).

<sup>23</sup> Stacey’s research with cinema audiences drew on cultural studies models, specifically on Hall’s influential model for ‘encoding and decoding’ audiences responses, a challenge to the notion of an audience positioned by, for example, TV, (Hall cited in Stacey, 1994, p.36) and advanced the notion of an active feminine position for the female audience.



simultaneously undermining the notion of femininity being inextricably linked to passivity. In addition, such work with audiences overturned the assumption of women as the worst viewers and consumers.<sup>24</sup>

## Women's Pleasures

### Developing feminist knowledge of women's pleasures

Frequently acknowledged as "*the founding document of psychoanalytic film theory*" (Modelski, cited in van Zoonen, 1990, p. 53) Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema* was unequivocally opposed to women milking pleasure from Hollywood movies.<sup>25</sup> The influence of Mulvey's approach was pervasive on broader aspects of visual culture. In stark contrast, redemptive or recuperative feminist research tended to endorse aspects of women's experiences as audiences and popular culture generally, these were defined by Charlotte Brunsdon as "*academic analysis of popular texts and pastimes which sought to discredit both the left-pessimistic despair over, and the high cultural dismissal of, mass and popular culture*" (Brunsdon cited in Stacey, 1994, p. 46).

The conceptualisation of women as easily manipulated passive dopes in the 'transmission' and 'effects' models of early audience research, and the pessimistic, "*dark and suffocating*" analysis of femininity in Mulvey (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 97) was rigorously critiqued in feminist audience research from the 1980s.<sup>26</sup> Van Zoonen points out that "*as we acknowledge the pleasure women derive from watching soap operas it becomes increasingly difficult to find moral justifications for criticising their contribution to the hegemonic construction of gender identities*" (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 7).

### Models of feminist research on women's pleasures in post-war popular culture

#### (i) Romantic fiction : Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*

Concurrent with a radicalising of feminist research in film, spectatorship and audiences, the recruitment of a range of ethnographic, sociological and historicizing approaches were brought to

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<sup>24</sup> In *The Female Gaze*, Stacey anticipated later, radical perspectives by suggesting that discussions about sexuality and spectatorship problematise universal notions about women's viewing (and reading) positions and pleasures and challenged feminist research to embark on work with lesbian viewers. "*The question of the lesbian spectator, or the lesbian look, may be reified and oversimplistic. Indeed there is likely to be a whole set of desires and identifications with differing configurations at stake, which cannot necessarily be fixed according to the conscious sexual identities of the cinema spectators*" (Stacey, 1988, p. 114). Stacey's *Stargazing* had a significant impact on this research project on a range of registers, theoretically and methodologically. For this reason, Stacey is cited across several of the sections in this Review.

<sup>25</sup> She claimed, "*It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty destroys it. That is the intention of this article*" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 24).

<sup>26</sup> Hobson's work on female viewers of *Crossroads*, McRobbie's on the cultures of working-class girls, Radway and Ang's analysis of audiences (for romance reading and soaps respectively) and Modelski's redemptive readings of popular texts, have, amongst other contributions, developed feminist knowledge to include a reading of media as not necessarily bad for women, reproductive of dominant ideology, unworthy of critical analysis or evidence of false consciousness.





3. Studio portrait of Marlene Dietrich in *Film Portraits 3* annual, unpaginated, coloured-in by reader, Fay.



women reading popular fiction, watching mainstream film and TV. These methods and the testimonies and interpretation of pleasures that emerged began to challenge findings that had historically foregrounded psychic displeasures and essential passive femininity. Janice Radway, in a germinal study on female readers of romance novels discovered that the pleasures romance readers enjoyed were not restricted to text but were often material, ritualised and broadly experiential (Radway, 1984, p86).<sup>27</sup> An aspect of germinal early Second-Wave feminist research had been literary; analyses of high cultural texts by men on the basis of their treatment of women and uncovering the hidden or misinterpreted canon of women's literature and art (Millett, 1971, Firestone, 1970, Spender, 1980, Greer, 1979, Showalter 1977, Nochlin, 1991). In marked contrast, Radway's aim in her groundbreaking research on low cultural romance readers was to "*distinguish analytically between the significance of the event of reading and the meaning of the text constructed as its consequence*" (Radway 1984, p. 4). Both Radway and Stacey cited women's viewing and reading as oppositional and pointed to a range of ways through which their responses to discourses of femininity fore-grounded 'independence', 'autonomy', 'rebelliousness' and 'individuality' (Stacey, 1994, p. 238, Radway, 1984, p. 125).<sup>28</sup>

Feminist research on female audiences sought to theorise such activity as relational. The sense of belonging and connectedness to others through cultural consumption within an audience marked the memories of Stacey's respondents, and Radway confirmed this as an important one for her romance readers. Romance reading "*led to a desire to provide pleasure for other women.*" (Radway, 1984, p. 17).<sup>29</sup>

## (ii) Film and TV: – Stacey's *Stargazing: female spectators of Hollywood cinema*

Stacey read the theoretical distance between film and cultural studies methods as ironically resulting in a lack of knowledge on audiences' pleasures, despite the fact that Hollywood had been recognised in many feminist critiques as the key conduit for women to consume idealised images

<sup>27</sup> Although Radway had some reservations about the ritualised act of romance reading. As a 'compensatory' strategy it has to be enacted time and again.

<sup>28</sup> Radway's readers for example, described their favourite heroines as 'intelligent', 'spunky' and 'independent' (Radway, 1984, p. 125) absolutely against the grain of patriarchal and early feminist views of women objectified through Hollywood and the romance novel, her housewife readers "*are oppositional because they refuse the self-abnegating social role*" despite the fact that the romance's narrative structure embodied a recapitulation and recommendation of patriarchy (ibid. p. 44). For van Zoonen, Radway's analysis of the pleasures of reading romances undermined any conception of readers and audiences of popular culture as burdened by a false consciousness (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 109).

<sup>29</sup> Radway makes causal links between romance reading and the 'transformation' of a significant number of readers into writers of romance (Radway, 1984, p. 17). Her text became one of the most oft-cited feminist projects to have recuperated women's pleasures in popular culture. Brunsdon, Ang and others have praised its accomplishments but noted the: "*mutual exteriority of the two positions, 'feminist' and 'romance reader'*. The distribution of identities is clear-cut: Radway, the researcher, is a feminist and not a romance fan, the Smithton women, the researched, are romance readers and not feminists. From such a perspective, the political aim of the project becomes envisaged as one of bridging this profound separation between 'us' and 'them'" (Ang cited in Brunsdon, 1991, p. 380).



femininity.<sup>30</sup> She re-interpreted three key processes through which her female respondents could be said to have derived pleasure from cinema: 'escapism', 'identification' and 'consumption'. *Stargazing* made a significant contribution to feminist knowledge in that it exemplified efforts to address both the neglect of the female audience and star (and the relationship between the two as defined by the spectator) and achieved this by demonstrating that it was possible to combine empirical and psychoanalytic methodologies.<sup>31</sup> Stacey's move came at a point when feminism had all but relinquished any hope that female identification (read negatively as 'absence' and 'lack') and pleasures (read as 'masochistic') could be wrested from the spectre of masculine dominance inherent in Freudian and Lacanian theory.<sup>32</sup>

At the very outset, Stacey's focus on audience's accounts of the pleasures of cinema revealed a paradoxical commonplace but yet new knowledge for feminist research – that the prime interest and pleasure for her female respondents was the female star. Through such research the material dimension and pleasures of viewing Hollywood movies; the 'extra cinematic' the atmospheric effects that engaged the senses indeed, the 'whole cinema experience' was contributed to the mass of feminist research that had privileged the visual. Stacey's identification of terrains of pleasure in cinema included notions of femininity constructed in respondents' memories; of abundant hair, costumes, fragments of bodies in close-up and glamorous *mis-en-scene* but also of cinema interiors remembered as soft, visually appealing 'exotic' and sensual.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of a discourse of escapism for Stacey's respondents was significant, whether longed for nostalgically, or reappraised self-critically, hence her project developed aims towards "*an analysis of the meanings of escapism in relation to the cinema and an investigation of the relationship between escapism and the cultural construction of femininity*" (ibid. p. 92). Narcissism was reconstituted: from a derogatory state linked to femininity to a necessary part of all subjectivities, and

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<sup>30</sup> *Stargazing* had as its focus the memories of British female spectators of Hollywood movies of the 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>31</sup> Rather than a blanket rejection of Althusserian and Lacanian theory, or a slavish adherence to Mulvey's orthodoxy, Stacey's aim in *Stargazing* was to "*offer an investigation of the ways in which psychic investments are grounded within specific sets of historical and cultural relations which in turn shape the formations of identities on conscious and unconscious levels*" (Stacey 1994, p. 79). In the light of psychoanalytic film theories that attempted to explore the developments of unconscious identities, (for example Mulvey and Metz) identification itself was widely viewed by feminists as "*a cultural process complicit with the reproduction of dominant culture by reinforcing patriarchal forms of identity*" (ibid. p. 132).

<sup>32</sup> "*Within a Lacanian framework [...] women's pleasures in Hollywood cinema, either through identification with the female protagonist, or otherwise, can only be conceived of as a sign of their complicity with their oppression under patriarchy.*" (ibid. p. 133).

<sup>33</sup> Stacey argued that such cinema pleasures were 'gendered' on a range of registers, were powerfully evocative when first experienced and could be recalled in detail in memories. Such sensations intensified the difference between the audiences lived experiences and the other worldliness of the screen images: "*It is precisely the feminisation of the context of cultural consumption which contributed to the pleasures of cinema going at a time when such 'expressions' of femininity remained relatively unavailable to many women in everyday life in Britain*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 97). Tamsin Wilton has concurred, finding that the 'cultural product', the meaning of a film, is produced by an act of cooperation, "*located in the intersection of two cultures, that of the auteur and the production system and that of the spectator*" (Wilton, 1995, p. 152).





Marlene in lively mood in a scene from "Golden Earrings", a story of Gestapo agents, gypsies, and a secret mission in Germany.

4. Studio portrait of Marlene Dietrich, in *Film Portraits 3* annual, 1949, unpaginated, coloured in by reader, Fay.



one that was activated in the complex relationships between self, ideal self and idealised images of femininity as enacted in the cinema (ibid. p.132).

Notwithstanding the cautiousness of feminist critics such as Modleski<sup>34</sup> feminist media researchers have been interested to investigate the mass appeal to women of the formally academically untouchable feminised excesses of TV, in particular soap viewing.<sup>35</sup> Belinda Budge proposed that feminist rejection of women's pleasures in popular culture both denied a complex and significant phenomenon and called into question the underpinnings of the methodologies that neglected them.<sup>36</sup> In her work on audiences viewing *Dallas*, Ang developed a feminist research methodology that included an examination of taste in the viewing pleasures of women and suggested that "*popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of recognition*" (Ang cited in Stacey, 1994, p. 45).<sup>37</sup> Such readings advanced feminist research to embrace the notion of active female readers and viewers and simultaneously challenged notions of high and low, good and bad taste. In 1988, reflecting on Mulvey's feminist attack on the popular pleasures of film, Gamman indicted this position since it "*never explains why women who are not feminists should want to engage in this process*" (Gamman, 1988, p. 24).

Feminist research with women and popular cultural texts in the 1980s and 1990s unequivocally overhauled the Images of Women and Mulveyian notions of objectification that dominated feminist theory from the 1970s: "*In identifying the niches in dominant culture, feminist film scholars have shown how mainstream cinema allows – be it often against the grain - female spectator positions, with women as well as men functioning as objects of the female gaze*" (van Zoonen 1994, p. 150).

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<sup>34</sup> Who have feared audience researchers winding up 'falling in love' with their subjects and "*writing apologies for mass culture and embracing its ideology*" (Modleski cited in van Zoonen, 1994, p. 117).

<sup>35</sup> Dorothy Hobson's work identified the ways through which viewers used soaps, "*to think and talk about their own lives.*" (van Zoonen 1994, p. 118). Van Zoonen has cited Hobson's research as evidence that "*watching soaps could contribute to the interpersonal relationships and the culture of the workplace*" (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 118). Stacey's term for this in the context of film audiences is 'self-narrativisation'.

<sup>36</sup> "*In the case of soap opera the pleasures for women spectators are legion. Addiction, anticipation, repetition and interruption are among them [...] In dismissing the role of Alexis [Carrington, character in Dallas] as irrelevant to feminism, the women watching are also dismissed.*" (Budge, 1988, p. 102).

<sup>37</sup> Van Zoonen also cites examples of research by Morley and Gray who demonstrate that friendship and "*an almost separate female culture*" can surround women's video watching practices (van Zoonen 1994, p. 116) and concluded that "*the particular gendered pleasures of soaps are [...] seen to originate in the centrality of themes and values associated with the private sphere*" (ibid. p. 121).



### (iii) Music for women's pleasure

Whilst feminist research on women as audiences for popular TV and film began to be theorised in the late 1980s, work on female audiences for female music performers only began to develop a decade later. The early Second-Wave generated no feminist canonical works on women and popular music, let alone analyses of women as fans, consumers or audiences for pop.<sup>38</sup> However, music performances, music reviews and ideological positions on both women's production and consumption of and access to music was an important component in the proliferation of Women's Liberation events and in the feminist media.<sup>39</sup>

The relationships between gender and sexuality and contemporary popular music was first addressed by Frith and McRobbie in 1978 (Frith and McRobbie, 1990)<sup>40</sup> This pioneering contribution began to distinguish forms of music production and consumption and made efforts to define for the pleasures of consumption on the grounds of gender for different, albeit generalised as young and white, audiences.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, a slew of feminist inspired anthologies of women in rock and pop were published in the 1980s, and 1990s (Cooper, 1995; Whittall, 1998; O'Brien, 1995; Greig, 1989; Whiteley, 1997).<sup>42</sup>

For over two decades, concurrent with the development of music and gender studies the white, American female music star Madonna provided a lodestone for feminist debates on the array of possible meanings of female music performers albeit largely theoretically for female music critics, and consumers. Feminist texts on Madonna mirrored the fracturing of debates discussed earlier on media texts, between 'Images of Women' and 'transmission' and 'effects' models. Madonna was read as passively rehearsing and self-objectifying for the benefit of patriarchy and capitalism (for example,

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<sup>38</sup> Although feminist energies were gradually directed towards the recovery of lost (mainly white) women to the canon, leading to the restoration of figures such as Hildegard von Bingen and Ethel Smyth.

<sup>39</sup> I discuss this later in this thesis. The analysis of popular music itself is a young, and, as Sheila Whiteley attests, an ill-defined discipline in academia: "*there is no single methodological approach; there are no clearly demarcated areas of investigation [...] it is rebellious, contesting the established citadels of traditional musicology*" (Whiteley, 1997, p. xiii) and historically "*relegated to the side-lines of academic debate*" (ibid. p. xv). In an analysis of *The Guardian's* Women's Page that forms part of the literature reviewed for this study, the lack of coverage and the total absence of reviews of popular music (or popular culture) in the 1960s, a paradigm shift from US to British musical hegemony (Cooper and Cooper, 1993, passim; Frith, 1991, p. 263) indicates its disqualification as a serious subject for broadsheets in this period.

<sup>40</sup> Debates on Women and Rock had peppered early issues of *Spare Rib* (for example, Fudger, 1976) including a report on a conference held by music magazine *Melody Maker* in October 1973, but these articles tended to be focussed on the patriarchal, pragmatic, issues of discrimination facing musicians such as Maddy Prior, Elkie Brooks and Marsha Hunt or highlighted radical feminist approaches to songwriting/performing in interviews with musicians such as Frankie Armstrong or the all-woman band Stepney Sisters.

<sup>41</sup> Frith and McRobbie succeeded in problematising the notion of so-called naturalness either as a state of male sexuality or as a characteristic of rock. In 'Afterthoughts', Frith reflected that the earlier article was conceived just as "*cultural analysis became do-it-yourself structuralism*" and that consequently the article was "*charged with essentialism*" (Frith, 1990, p. 420). Frith revised his decisive differentiation between male activity and female passivity since "*once we start asking how pop produces pleasure, then notions of passivity/activity cease to make much sense*" (ibid. p. 422).

<sup>42</sup> In her contribution to the field of popular music and gender, *Sexing the Groove*, Whiteley illustrates the ways in which cultural studies and post-structuralist texts were appropriated and intersect the now burgeoning literature in this field; researchers on music and gender have used approaches from sociology, semiotics, cultural studies and film studies.



hooks, 1992), whilst more redemptive readings discussed Madonna in terms of agency and masquerade and stressed her plural address, to different sexualities, genders, ethnicities and so forth (for example, Robertson, 1996; Andermahr, 1994; Schwichtenberg, 1993).<sup>43</sup> Despite the subsequent lack of empirical data that would usefully contribute knowledge of what so-called real women think about Madonna,<sup>44</sup> her multi textuality, dexterity in referencing film, art, design and fashion, and her pervasiveness in global culture, made her a paradigmatic model for feminist, post-structuralist and deconstructive analysis in the field of popular music.<sup>45</sup> But as the recent trajectory of feminist writing on music and gender has demonstrated, a determining theme in any analysis of contemporary popular music is the recalcitrance of the dominant ideology of rock at the heart of popular music in Britain and the US from the 1950s. Coates, following Frith has interpreted contemporary music as rehearsing the dichotomy: rock's 'raw expressive power' versus soul's raw but paradoxically 'manufactured' emotion.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly The Rock Masculinity stereotype "*is still very much in play discursively and psychically, is one in which any trace of the 'feminine' is expunged, incorporated or appropriated*" (Coates cited in Whiteley, 1997, p. 52).<sup>47</sup> Rock's bourgeois appeal, mythologised in the fabled route from art school to rock bands has necessarily informed the taste and style of British rock forms.<sup>48</sup> The synonymy of popular female performers with television may have further reduced the worth of female stars for serious musicological research given that, "*the first TV generation ended up claiming like Frank Zappa, that 'TV is slime'*" (Frith, 1988, p. 213).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> An early, but prescient critique by Shelagh Young on an essay by Sheryl Garratt (1988) reflected related debates in cultural studies and film studies in its focus on the neglected consumers of Madonna's pop, and its critique of 'feminist puritanism': "*The problem posed by Madonna was that she neither looked nor spoke like a really 'right on' woman. In fact, in order to justify her love for Madonna, Sheryl Garrett had to turn to the fictional narrative of the film Desperately Seeking Susan which towards the end, has Madonna and her co-star Rosanna Arquette holding hands together 'in triumph'. This was an image, says Garrett, 'that meant we could relax and admit all along, we'd loved Madonna.' But isn't it interesting that Garrett should think that 'we' were never relaxed about Madonna? Clearly the 'we' of Garrett's text addresses a particular group of women. Garrett is really speaking to the semi-professional feminists, to women who have served their time as timid neophytes in a respectable number of consciousness-raising, therapy and women's studies groups... some women were always relaxed about Madonna simply because they were never familiar with those strands of feminist thought which have contributed to feminism's own brand of Puritanism*" (Young, 1988, p. 179).

<sup>44</sup> A rare and illuminating non-academic text produced by Kay Turner, *I dream of Madonna: women's dreams of the goddess of pop* hints at a rich field to be further researched. (Turner, 1993)

<sup>45</sup> The absorption on Madonna's self-production has somewhat obscured Frith's claim that *all* forms of musical production can be interpreted as 'constructed' "*My assumption is that no musical event, no way of singing, no rhythm comes naturally [...] no one imagines that books or films just happen – but because of rock's particular ideology of 'raw power' and 'direct energy', identifying the actual mechanisms involved can be difficult*" (Frith, 1988, p. 4). Whiteley concurs that "*music's abstract character allows for a mapping of individual experiences and meaning that provide a sense of identity and a fluidity of engagement.*" (Whiteley, 1997, p. xxxii).

<sup>46</sup> "*Rock is metonymic with 'authenticity' while 'pop' is metonymic with 'artifice'. Sliding even further down the metonymic slope, 'authentic' becomes 'masculine' while 'artificial' becomes 'feminine'*" (Coates, 1997, p. 57).

<sup>47</sup> This theme is also addressed in Sara Cohen's interrogation of the mythic Liverpool music scene. Finding this an inhospitable territory for women, Cohen concluded that rock can be linked to the street, the road, male activity and rebellion, a "*bourgeois bohemia*" (Cohen, 1997, p. 57). Women are exiled to the bedroom and resigned to a passive consumption of pop. (ibid. p. 30)

<sup>48</sup> See for example, Alex Seago (1995) *Burning the box of beautiful things: on the origins of Art School Pop Style in London 1959-1965*

<sup>49</sup> Although as Frith has noted rock too was dependent on television, Dusty Springfield, the focus of a chapter in this thesis, has been recently homogenised with Cilla and Lulu into so-called Brit Girls. Cilla's reinvention as a hostess on popular television programmes has arguably unfavourably impacted upon the appraisal of her own and Dusty's work in the 1960s.



Will Straw has discussed the historically gendered hierarchies that have gradually come to characterise record consumption itself. 'Women's records' are compared with 'men's collections' reflecting, "*the higher prestige that has accrued, historically, to the sorts of objects amassed by men*" (Straw, 1997, p. 6).<sup>50</sup> In a move reminiscent of Stacey's recognition of extra-cinematic pleasures, Negus has expanded the possible pleasures of consuming popular music to include an acknowledgement of the importance of pop and rock ephemera in the relationship between consumer and star.<sup>51</sup> Whereas the partiality, obsolescence or absence of documentation, performances and recordings of popular musicians<sup>52</sup> continues to pose specific challenges to academic work with primary sources, memories of media experiences, and work with extra musical, TV or film texts remain marginal in research activities. A further limitation exists in the types of performers discussed in recent work.<sup>53</sup> Alongside analyses of the problem of masculinity in British and American rock, the relationship of girls to boy bands and, more recently, to queer or radical singer songwriters or riot bands dominates the albeit narrow field.<sup>54</sup> There is as yet no counterpart to Stacey's *Stargazing*, no analysis of older women's tastes and pleasures in female popular stars, or those of black or ethnic minority women, or a thorough ethnographic scoping of girls pleasures in popular girl bands.

Susan McClary (1991) in her pioneering feminist musicological text, *Feminine Sentences*, endorses an analysis of the *embodied* meanings of female musicians. She interprets the neglect of women's music as betraying "*fear – fear of women, fear of the body*" (McClary, 1991, p. 4).

### Discourses of pleasurable transformation

In the developing feminist literature on media texts, spectators/audiences and fashioning, the possibility of 'pleasurable transformations' began to be analysed and theorised, informed by a (re)turn

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<sup>50</sup> Comparisons might be made here with the auteurship designated to men's consumption of films compared with the perception of 'movie-going' female audiences. Straw contributed to this debate and claimed that male practices of accumulation take shape: "*In an ongoing relationship between the personal space of the collection and public, discursive systems of ordering or value... they tie each male's collection to an ongoing, collective enterprise of cultural archaeology.*" (Straw, 1997, p. 6)

<sup>51</sup> For example, "*Album sleeves also explain how the music contained within them should be, 'understood, interpreted and appropriated [...] the words and images on them can serve an educational and agitational purpose; providing information about particular issues, and encouraging people to participate in an activity or to adopt the lifestyles signified by clothing and hairstyles*" (Negus, 1997, p. 186 ).

<sup>52</sup> Particularly for female and black artists as Whiteley argues (Whiteley, 1997, p. xxv).

<sup>53</sup> Even Frith's nuanced interpretation of Gracie Fields (Frith, 1988) failed to inspire feminist work in its wake. Dolly Parton has only recently begun to be critically appraised from standpoints other than a feminist antipathy to her modelling of feminine-excess or via a gay male/queer appropriation. In her paper *Dollyizin'* Jeannie Ludlow (1997) reads Parton's vocal effects in the frame of French feminist theory and connects Luce Irigaray's theories of disruptive laughter and Mary Russo's theories of the Female Grotesque (1994) to assert that Parton is never merely subjected by her performance of feminine excess, but manages to "*recover the place of her exploitation' through making specific sounds from underneath her 'encrusted femininity*" (Ludlow cited in Patrick, 1997). There is a paucity of critical literature on female popular culture stars, particularly those who fashion 'to excess'.

<sup>54</sup> Gender boundaries are maintained in some significant territories. I have noted the reluctance in the perennial Beatles retrospectives of any claims to position them in a boy band trajectory, although research participant Sandy discusses them using this phrase in this study.



to empirical and ethnographic research. In *Stargazing*, Stacey proposed two specific forms of identification: identificatory *fantasies* were (private) identifications that involved fantasies about the relationship between the identity of the star in the cinema and the identity of the spectator; identificatory *practices* were forms of recognition, perceived by and possibly involving others where spectators transformed some aspects of their identity as a result of their relationship with a favourite star,<sup>55</sup> Drawing on work by Caroline Steedman, and the responses and memories of her respondents, Stacey extended the existing psychoanalytic consensus of the 'impossibility of femininity' by recording the envy, failure and frustration experienced by women who had aspired, attempted and failed to achieve the idealised femininity of stars.<sup>56</sup>

Stacey's close reading of audiences' 'cinematic identificatory practices' also revealed their articulation of forms of desire and 'erotic pleasure' (Stacey, 1994, p. 175).<sup>57</sup> Similarities and differences in femininity inform audiences viewing pleasures and were seen to be determined by notions of high and low femininity (Gaines cited in Stacey, 1994, p. 57) national identity, discourse of glamour and feminine abundance, sexuality, class, age and so on.

Work on female spectatorship from the 1980s on, proposed that female desire could be understood in more complex ways than a binary oppositional conceptualisation of gender allows.<sup>58</sup> McRobbie's early study of girls had anticipated these later readings of femininity as potentially 'troublesome'. In Gaines' evaluation of McRobbie's work, she stated that what was significant for feminist theory and how it distinguishes itself from subculture theory "*is that the counter-ideology is produced with the most despised signs of 'femaleness' and the accoutrements of 'femininity'*" (Gaines, 1990, p. 8).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Instead of a rather static division between mortals and goddesses characteristic of the pleasures [of the former] it is the imagined transformation of self which provides the cinematic pleasure" (Stacey, 1994, p. 145).

<sup>56</sup> Steedman (1989) fused autobiography, sociology and psychoanalysis in her account of her own and her mother's lives. Her memory of her working-class mother's longing for the New Look became a resonant source for future feminist research including Stacey's on the meaning of material culture in the lives of women in the post-war period: "*The cultural construction of feminine identity involves failure, not only at the psychic level but also at the material... hence the production of particularly intense forms of feminine desire came through the experience of material constraint*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 217).

<sup>57</sup> This was a significant move, from the delimiting positioning of the feminine in psychoanalytic theory and the pejorative reading of female identification in both film and cultural studies. Stacey discovered that female spectators could enjoy a spectrum of intensely pleasurable identifications with female stars in particular. "*Indeed it is precisely in same-sex relations that the distinction between desire and identification may blur most easily and moreover, it might be suggested that therein lies their particular appeal*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 175). With the express aim to broaden feminist knowledge in this area, she identified a range of intimacies between femininities – an "*intimacy which is knowledge*" (Frith cited in Stacey, 1994, p. 175). And simultaneously highlighted the limitations of earlier feminist debates focussing on Images of Women, fragmentation and objectification. Stacey's research revealed forms of feminine culture that evoked intense pleasure and delight: "*The recognition of shared knowledge forms the basis for such intimacy between femininities which has tended to be ignored in existing accounts of feminine consumption*" (ibid. p. 195).

<sup>58</sup> In 1988, Belinda Budge proposed that "*Analysing the nature of the relationship between representation and the pleasures of an active audience provides a pathway for feminist analysis to tackle anew the notion of the erotic – and to enjoy and celebrate the wilder side of women*" (Budge, 1988, p. 111).

<sup>59</sup> Budge's essay was included in Gamman and Marshment's *The Female Gaze*. The title indicative of its refuting of the



But reflecting on the empirical data gathered from women consumers and spectators in the post-war period, Hollows has acknowledged that such accounts frequently problematised canonical feminist interpretations: *"The media images that the white middle class professional Betty Friedan interpreted as damaging to women in the 1950s were the very same images of femininity which some working class women may have found 'liberating' "* (Hollows, 2000, p. 24).

In 1979, The Birmingham Feminist History Group, attempted to re-evaluate aspects of femininity, and the quiescence of feminism in Britain in the 1950s. *"Where feminism was [...] bound by femininity in such a manner that we as feminists today do not easily recognise its activities as feminist"* (Birmingham Feminist History Group, 1979, p. 48). A decade later, the orthodox feminist political critique of make-up, literally and metaphorically emblematic for many of the futile laborious reproduction of a rigidly proscribed masquerade had come under scrutiny by writers like Radnor who problematised such proscriptions by considering *"the possibility of an economy of pleasure articulated as repetition –that the very pleasure of making –up is produced by the strict formulation of its practice"* (Radner, 1989, p. 320).<sup>60</sup>

The recent conceptualisation of fashioning femininity as potentially empowering or transforming can be read as a reversal of one of early Second-Wave feminisms core values. It has necessitated, as Gaines argues, re-evaluations of individual women's agency and reflections by some feminist academics on the importance of personal morals and tastes in forming theoretical views about others:

For feminist scholars, confronting our own moralism and replacing it with acceptance has meant an extension of the horizon of our research [...] Wearing high culture blinders, we are unable to appreciate the strength of the allure, the richness of the fantasy, and the quality of the compensation, especially if our analysis consists only of finding new ways to describe the predictable mechanisms of patriarchal culture (Gaines, 1990, p. 6).

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inimitability of the Male Gaze and a further distancing of the Mulveyian standpoint. Contributor Shelagh Young indicted the feminist policing of femininity and proposed, in a move away from McRobbie's early work, that girls *could* use feminine fashioning for radical transformation: *"Who needs to feel patronised by a sussed-out sister who has 'moved on' from wearing cosmetics and skirts, when for thousands of girls, clothes and make-up are the tools of their teenage rebellion"* (Young, 1988, p. 178).

<sup>60</sup> In a further departure Kuhn addressed the paradoxically dis/empowering processes of identification at work in the processes of a mother's investment *"of desire, fantasy and identification"* whilst dressing up her female child: *"The baby girl becomes its mother's muse, its body her canvas [...] to be looked at, admired, photographed, hailed as a credit to her mother"* (Kuhn, 1995, p. 52)



## Fashion and fashioning

Following the groundbreaking *Resistance through rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1979)

Hebdige's *Subculture: the meaning of style* (1981) was the first of many studies <sup>61</sup> to examine "*the phenomenon of outrageous body display and ornamentations-as-social-offence*" (Gaines, 1990, p. 8).

Subculture theory articulated its subjects through the language of style, the sociology of deviance and the (ab)use of commodities rather than fashioning or fashion. McRobbie's was perhaps the first critical voice to note that subculture theory was derived exclusively from the study of working-class male cultures, but subcultural theory's neglect of female fashion/ing also mirrored ambivalences to fashion in feminist theory.<sup>62</sup> Both so-called malestream interpretation of the field as irredeemably feminised, and paradoxically the taste or proscriptions of feminism stymied its development.<sup>63</sup> Gaines, in her groundbreaking collection noted that *Fabrications* was "*conceived during one phase of feminist film theory and criticism and has finally come together in a different one, a time more hospitable to costume as an area of investigation... from a moral stance... to a less proscriptive one*" (ibid.).<sup>64</sup>

In the late 1980s, in the wake of the first wave of subcultural research, and the onset of poststructuralist and postmodernism, fashion's outcast, fugitive status was ripe for critical appraisal. For Evans and Thornton amongst others, the challenge of fashion's liminality was its appeal whereby,

the practices which a culture insists are meaningless or trivial, the places where ideology has succeeded in becoming invisible, are practices in need of investigation... Fashion has always existed as a challenge to meaning where meaning is understood to involve some notion of coherence, a demonstrable consistency (Evans and Thornton, 1991, p. 48).

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<sup>61</sup> Emanating from Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

<sup>62</sup> Walkerdine also found research on subcultures alienating: "*I dreamt of glamour, read comics listened to pop music, worked hard at school and my father died early. I couldn't find in my history any of the exotic subcultural resistance that cultural studies wanted to me to find*" (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 19). As Gaines points out, whereas subcultural theory tended to exoticise and mythologise the fashioning of young male rebels "*Feminists in the Second-Wave originally explained the danger of fashion culture in terms of the patriarchy in league with capitalism*" (Gaines, 1990, p. 4). Indeed, critical literature on fashion/ing *per se* has developed only recently, and most often in the fissures and margins of academia. Design History and Theory as a discrete discipline has only recently found its way into academia; the first peer-reviewed journal on fashion *Fashion Theory* was not produced until the late 1990s.

<sup>63</sup> Evans and Thornton, as late as 1991, stated that "*The discussion of women's fashion has tended to reproduce unthinkingly preconceptions about femininity*" (Evans and Thornton 1991, p. 49). Gaines has observed that "*Early in the Second-Wave, beauty culture and feminism were seen as antithetical*" (Gaines, 1991, p. 3).

<sup>64</sup> Gaines acknowledged Elizabeth Wilson as a significant early feminist contributor to debates on fashion. Wilson provided insightful accounts of the role of women and fashion in both historical and contemporary contexts, notably *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985) Wilson also was an occasional contributor to *Spare Rib*, where her articles avoided an overly reductive reading of fashion. In her attention to historicity and the cultural genealogy of fashions, Wilson opened up new debates within feminism, for example in her conviction that "*The political subordination of women is an inappropriate point of departure, if, as I believe, the most important thing about fashion is not that it oppresses women*" (Wilson cited in Gaines, 1991, p. 7).



Consequently, accounts of fashion as communication became more widespread from this period (Barnard, 1991; Wilson 1985; Craik, 1994; Ash and Wilson, 1992; Gaines and Herzog, 1990; Buckley and Fawcett, 2002).<sup>65</sup>

### Fashioning lesbianism, fashioning feminism

The scant literature charting the history of feminist and lesbian fashion/ing frequently homogenises this multi-faceted field under the rubric Modernism.<sup>66</sup> From the mid 1850s in Britain and America, feminist politics had intersected with and generated dress reforms. In America, this alliance was exemplified by the Bloomer costume introduced in 1850 developed as a reaction to contemporary women's fashions that were considered widely by feminists to be inhibiting, unhealthy and "*a badge of degradation*" (Kesselman, 1991, p. 498). Kesselman points out that the public responded rabidly to the "*threat to gender distinctions*" represented by the combination of reform dress and feminism, through social ridicule, harassment and press lampooning that decried the supposed 'unsexing of women' (ibid. p. 501).<sup>67</sup>

A later paradigm shift in modernist, feminist and lesbian fashioning occurred in the post WWII, Cold War milieu in Britain the US and France. Elizabeth Wilson has noted that "*deviant identities were collapsed into one another so that bohemianism, leftwing radicalism and homosexuality seemed naturally and inevitably connected*" (Wilson, 1990, p. 71). She notes that by the early sixties, when she began frequenting the lesbian pub The Gateways in Chelsea "*the two modes, the bohemian and the traditional butch/femme coexisted but had a distinct class meaning [...] The more casual bohemian style was associated with the middle class teachers, journalists and artists whom my lover*

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<sup>65</sup> In addressing the debates over whether the wearer or the spectator over and above any intention of the designer conferred meaning on garments a key case was presented by Angela Partington in her investigation of working-class women's use of the New Look in the 1950s. Partington claimed that the female consumer was not simply a victim of fashion and marketing industries that aimed to dress women up in garments appropriate to their class identity, rather, the consumer created new meanings. Reviewing Partington's contribution Barnard contrasted this form of appropriation against the ubiquitous adoption of jeans, 'bra-burning', punk fashion and dress reform and suggested that, in investing fashion with new meanings, they were "*articulating class and gender identities in a new way... it resists appropriation by the dominant system by sampling and mixing identities, rather than trying to escape or reverse identities*" (Barnard, 1991, p. 141). Whereas the design and manufacturing industries had projected that the Utility inspired shirtwaist dress would be worn (demurely) by women labouring in the home, the New Look dress would be reserved for specific occasions demanding siren like glamour. Partington recognised that not only did women wear the New Look shaped garments 'inappropriately and improperly', but also hybrid versions were produced and concludes that working-class women "*used fashion to resist dominant ideologies of femininity*" (Partington cited in Barnard, 1991, p. 142).

<sup>66</sup> Problems accumulate in the slippages and fusing of modernist aesthetics, so-called feminist and lesbian style and post nineteenth century bourgeois stylings of masculinity and in the paucity of information on working-class, feminist and lesbian patterns of consumption and fashion. For example, in an essay examining the fashion stylings of British uber lesbians Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, Katrina Rolley states that Radclyffe Hall's "*whole aura [was] high-brow modernism*" (Rolley, 1990, p. 58). Her signature "*Titian hair in close Eton crop*" was ahead of the Modern *garçonne* bobs that were to become popular some years later. Wilson notes that fifty years or so earlier: "*manliness [...] came to be associated with sober dress*" Ergo, the fashionings that the aristocratic Hall was to adopt had become the "*hallmark of the elegant man*" (Wilson, 1990, p. 69).

<sup>67</sup> But notions of taste appear to have also been an important component in the battle for reform. The Dress Reform association called for dress for women that was of, "*refined taste, simplicity, economy and beauty*" (extract from *The Sibyl*, 9 September, 1856, cited in Kesselman, 1991, p. 503) anticipating the rise of an international bourgeois adoption of modernism in design.



and I got to know; strict butch/femme styles were working class" (Wilson, 1990, p. 71).<sup>68</sup> Feminist debates on pleasures from the 1980s did not remain focussed on the performances of femininity on the screen but began to extend into critiques on the prescriptiveness of residual feminist ideas about re/fashioning femininity.<sup>69</sup>

The re-evaluation of the cultural significance of specific fashionings by so-called ordinary women, following Wilson's endorsing of fashion as a serious subject for feminism, was taken further by Attfield and Kirkham who co-edited *A view from the interior, women, fashion and design* (1989). Rather than critiquing a range of gendered objects as semiotically indicative of patriarchal power, their contributors attempted a more historically and socially sensitive analysis of fashion. For example, whereas for many feminists, stiletto shoes were associated with (unwanted) male chivalry and female bondage contributor Lee Wright claimed they had had "*unambiguous resonance as sexual signs*" a symbol of 'glamour' and 'rebelliousness'.<sup>70</sup>

Early Second-Wave feminist analyses of fashionings considered to be objectifying, became enmeshed in complex political discussions that collapsed into often contradictory messages for other or so-called ordinary women around (sexual) violence against women and the meaning of clothing for men where women's responsibilities remained unclear.<sup>71</sup> Feminists occasionally (un)consciously rehearsed commonplace discriminatory for working-class displays of fashioning excesses in linking this to sexual availability.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> She also noted that Mary Quant came from the bohemian Chelsea Set of the fifties and, like Yves St Laurent before her "*built her style around the beatnik look*" (Wilson, 1990 p. 72).

<sup>69</sup> In an early move, that identifies the by now over determined notion of feminist style connoting authenticity and naturalness versus the transgressive artifice of other women, Young stated that: "*No feminist wants to confine their rebellion to the limited realm of personal appearance, but the strand within feminist discourse that stresses the 'authenticity' and political potential of a 'natural' look doesn't do justice to the women who dare to dress up [...] Mirroring the pathetic patriarchal practice of assessing women not by what they say or do but by their appearance, the 'authentic' feminists are forgetting that the 'natural' look is as carefully constructed and laden with meaning as any other style. Today, two features of the 'natural' female body – the absence of make-up and the presence of body hair – have become the over-simplifying signifiers of the feminists subject.*" (Young, 1988, p. 179). Ardill and O'Sullivan critiqued the lesbian subculture in the 1980s as "*androgeny, short hair for all, and a clean scrubbed face*" (Ardill and O'Sullivan, 1990).

<sup>70</sup> Consequently, Barnard argued all items of fashion and clothing must be considered as "undecideable objects" (Barnard, 1991, p. 163). Barnard has claimed that on the basis of Wright's reading, where the stiletto can be seen as "*inherently feminine*" (Wright, 1989, p. 7) and "*a symbol of female subordination*" and yet elsewhere been understood as symbolising forms of aggressive or rebellious womanhood, that the object is rendered "undecideable". Examining historically relevant texts including shoe trade literature and medical pronouncements Wright suggested that: "*the stiletto was used by some women to represent dissatisfaction with the conventional female image and to replace it with that of a 'modern' woman who was more active and economically independent than her predecessors*" (ibid. p. 14). She noted the paradox that, in retrospect, feminists had read the stiletto as a 'shackling instrument' and, whilst conceding that stilettos add emphasis to breasts and bottoms stated that she considered it a more important "*that the stiletto did not symbolise the housewife. [...] From 1957, the stiletto was associated with glamour, with rebellion: it represented someone who was in some way 'modern' and 'up-to-date' and above all someone who inhabited a worked outside the home – a 'go-getter'! Therefore it may be more accurate to suggest that the stiletto symbolised liberation rather than subordination.*" (ibid.).

<sup>71</sup> Such debates were sustained by the continued sexist treatment of women by the judiciary system where the clothing of the complainant in rape trials can still be considered relevant to whether or not the defendant was 'led on' (Lees, 1993, p. 229).

<sup>72</sup> The early Second-Wave feminist notions of genderless fashioning, and implied assumptions that only women fashioning femininity (to excess) triggered a sexualised gaze, are somewhat contradicted by Wilson in her observation that, because of its association with youth, and the prohibitions that preceded it: "*androgyny was a highly sexualised mode of self presentation in the Sixties*" (Wilson, 1990, p. 72).



## Fashion, consumption and desire

The normative conceptualisation in feminist theory of women's relationship to commodities is of women as objects and not subjects of exchange.<sup>73</sup> Stacey's reading of issues of consumption contested the prevailing focus of research (at the level of production) where consumers were homogenised. Her analysis revealed the interconnecting histories and pleasures for women gazing at shop windows and cinema screens. Stacey's challenge lay in her opposition to the notion of the inseparability of subjectivity from objectification. She cautioned that this "*is not synonymous with the uses and meanings of commodities to consumers*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 185).<sup>74</sup>

Stacey, like Partington, reviewed the process of consumption as implying the possibility of rejecting of self-sacrificing domesticity and motherhood<sup>75</sup> (Stacey, 1994, p. 230). Whilst concurring with the view that Hollywood *was* promoting images of femininity and female consumption, she argued that the dominant ideologies of the Hollywood producers did not inevitably square with that of female consumers. The consumer was not seen by Stacey as determining her relation to femininity solely through commodities, or that these processes were necessarily consumption as transgression, rather her view was that female consumers help produce different discourses in relation to consumption in a range of different contexts.<sup>76</sup>

Empirical work on fashioning is frequently embedded in larger research projects on subcultures. In *Sugar and Spice*, (1990) Sue Lees conducted research with young girls and boys on the effect language has on girls in adolescence. Here, the identification and prohibitions on fashioning feminine excess were shown to be culturally widespread but paradoxically elusive, linked to imagined sexualities and subject to derogatory classifications.<sup>77</sup> Lees concluded that because of this lack of

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<sup>73</sup> Mulvey and others promoted this view in the field of film studies where women's objectification, fetishisation and display as sexual spectacle have now been critiqued.

<sup>74</sup> The assumption that fashion was the enemy of women's emancipation in First-Wave feminism, is contested by Steven Zdatny who has argued that, "*what looks like repression in logic can feel like liberation in life*" (Zdatny, 1997, p. 387).

<sup>75</sup> For example, when connected with the exoticism of Paris or Hollywood.

<sup>76</sup> Gaines discussed the connection between narrative form, naturalistic detail, consumerism and the ideological production of female subjects. Relating her thesis to Radway's explanation of the pleasures of mimesis in romance novels, she claimed "*Extravagant costuming, justified as history, confirms a woman's concerns and interests by elevating them from ordinariness to the status of the exquisite object. The elegant gown is an homage to woman's 'preoccupations'*" (Gaines, 1990, p. 19). In a further important contribution to the debate, McRobbie has critiqued recent scholarship on consumption and the fashion industry as a feminised sector. In an impassioned, polemical address, she stated that foregrounding the material pleasures of women's consumption of fashion in new feminist literature on fashion has meant that "*poverty has dropped off the agenda*" (McRobbie, 1997, p. 73). She critiques the lack of feminist scholarship on how women shop, finding little or no material apart from research concerned with the feminisation of poverty (ibid. p. 81).

<sup>77</sup> "*The term 'slag' 'can be used in a whole range of circumstances. It implies that a girl sleeps around, but this may in fact have nothing to do with the case in point. A girl can be referred to as a slag if her clothes are too tight, too short, too smart or in any way sexually provocative, if she hangs around with boys, if she talks to another girl's boyfriend, if she talks too loudly or too much*" (Lees, 1990, p. 31).



clarity, girls were left in a permanent state of vulnerability (ibid. p. 63).<sup>78</sup> In her study, the penalties and dangers, but not the pleasures, of performing forms of fashioned femininity are highlighted.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, and drawing on the predominant memories of stars by respondents through an association with star clothes, hairstyles and make-up, Stacey demonstrated the ways such uses of images of femininity were defined by audiences in opposition to existing feminist knowledge:

Close-up displays of parts of the female may have functioned, not to alienate and objectify, but to produce a fascination which was remembered as a form of intimacy by female spectators. Thus ironically the very fetishism and fragmentation criticised within feminist film theory seems to have had a rather different meaning for spectators whose memories of such effects can be understood as a form of personalisation of the Hollywood star otherwise kept at a distance on the screen (Stacey, 1994, p. 206).

In Black and Sharma's research on women's uses of beauty therapy the findings included the recognition that neither clients nor beauty therapists interviewed for the research stated that their concerns were with achieving beauty, but rather 'pampering', 'treatment' or 'grooming' (Black and Sharma, 2001, p. 100). Similarly, Furman's intimate portrait of customer's uses of an older, Jewish women's beauty salon included descriptions that exceeded any commonplace understanding of fashion, gender and consumption, including as it did testimonies of enduring friendships, community, health and care-giving (Furman, 1997).

The *Formations* research project, (Skeggs, 2001a; Skeggs, 2001b) a longitudinal ethnographic study led by Beverley Skeggs represents a recent important departure in studies of fashion and class. Building on Bourdieu's *Distinction*, and work by feminist writers such as Steedman and Walkerdine, Skeggs highlights a desire for respectability as the prime motivation in working-class women's fashioning tastes. Her conceptualisation of the mis-recognition of the symbolism of working-class

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<sup>78</sup> She demonstrated that although the terminology that linked feminine excess to notions of degraded dangerous sexualities in women was frequently cited in research on boys it had "received little serious analysis as a cultural form [...] it has been taken for granted that everyone knows what the term refers to. It has been assumed that the terms 'slag' or 'easy lay' simply apply to certain identifiable girls. [...] While everyone apparently knows a 'slag' and stereotypically depicts her as a thick, untidy, untastefully dressed and made-up, loud-mouthed and, of course, as someone who sleeps around, it seems that such a stereotype bears no relation to the girls (virtually any girls) to whom the term is applied" (ibid. p. 36).

<sup>79</sup> "This constant sliding means that any girl is always available for the designation 'slag', in any number of ways. Appearance is crucial: by wearing too much makeup; by having your skirt slit too high; by not combing your hair; by wearing jeans to dances; or high heels to school; by having your trousers too tight or your tops too low. Trudy referred to these as 'sexual clothes'" (ibid. p. 42). Nevertheless Lees followed Hall and Jefferson and McRobbie in a subcultural reading of fashioning as rebellion: "Femininity is often used by this group of girls as a form of rebellion. Girls dress up, wear make-up and short skirts and often flaunt their sexuality" (ibid. p. 169).



women's fashioning to excess and its consequences on women's access to cultural capital, contributes new knowledge to feminism.

## Modernism and Visual Culture

### Feminine excess as Modernist 'crime'

The literature on Modernism in Design and Fine Art, can be defined as critical, pedagogical and historical texts generated in Europe from the early 1800s but principally those generated at the end of the nineteenth century (Pioneer Modernism) until the onset of post-modern perspectives in the field around the mid-1980s.<sup>80</sup> In general terms, the literature can be critiqued as being both canonical and eschatological; it strongly endorses a trajectory of thinkers and makers, propelled by apparently uncanny forces that led design, architecture and fine art towards increasingly functional, autonomous, abstracted and utopian, anti-historicist, universal end point.<sup>81</sup> Although the absolute origins of Modernism in the visual arts are continually disputed,<sup>82</sup> Naomi Schor has linked Modernism with significant precedents in the history of art where the detail is set against good taste.<sup>83</sup> In her 'archaeological' survey of the detail, Schor identified the consistent sexism of the rhetoric used and concluded that,

The ornamental is inevitably bound up with the feminine, when it is not the pathological – two notions Western culture has had a great deal of trouble distinguishing. This imaginary femininity weighs heavily on the fate of the detail as well as of the ornament in aesthetics, burdening them with the negative connotations of the feminine: the decorative, the natural, the impure and the monstrous (Schor, 1987, p. 45).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Pioneer Modernism coined by Greenhalgh (1990, cited in Julier, 1993) developed between 1900 and 1930 in Europe. The term is in part an acknowledgement of Nikolaus Pevsner's influential, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936) the text that canonised Modernism. Hebdige has commented that "*The austere patrician values of the Continental Modern Movement were perfectly compatible with the definitions of 'good taste' which were then becoming prevalent in [British] broadcasting circles*" (Hebdige, 1981, p. 47). Pevsner's *Pioneers* and Bertram's *Design* were published as Pelican specials and "*soon found favour and support amongst the dominant [British] taste-making elites*" (ibid.).

<sup>81</sup> A belief in minimalism is still widespread as I discuss in 'Queening It'. The British star architect John Pawson defines it as "*the perfection that an artefact achieves when it is no longer possible to improve it by subtraction*" (Pawson cited in Irving, 2001, p. 77).

<sup>82</sup> As my tentative introduction above illustrates.

<sup>83</sup> Schor acknowledged "*an ancient association of details and decadence, which runs in an unbroken continuity from the critique of realism to the critique of modernism*" (ibid. p. 42). For example, Reynolds, in his *Discourses on Art* delivered to the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790 stated that "*The whole of beauty consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind*" (Reynolds cited in Schor, 1987, p. 11).

<sup>84</sup> Schor argued that as early as the start of the nineteenth century the association of the ornamental with feminine duplicity or degradation was couched in terms "*as though the ornament-femininity equation were an established fact. As though it were, in a word, natural.*" (ibid.) As if in anticipation of the future ambivalences written through the literature of feminism on femininity Schor noted "*To focus on the detail and more particularly as the detail as negativity is to become aware, [...] of its participation in a larger semantic network, bounded on the one side by the ornamental, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence and on the other by the everyday, whose 'prosiness' is rooted in the domestic sphere of the social life presided over by*



Fashion historians have revealed how the gradual gendering of the detail characterised European bourgeois apparel in the nineteenth century, for example “*high heels became ‘female’ footwear and were disallowed in a male sartorial code*” (Wright, 1989, p. 8)<sup>85</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century “*...the general adoption of simple, plain, drab and sober garments and the wearing of trousers in particular, had effectively established a separate and distinct identity for men*” (Barnard, 1991, p. 109).<sup>86</sup> With this move, fashion was reflecting the views of Pioneer Modernist Adolf Loos. Schor has critiqued Loos’s views on the detail as ‘Darwinian’ citing his belief that “*Cultural evolution is equivalent to the removal of ornament from articles in daily use*” (Loos in Schor, 1987, p. 53).<sup>87</sup>

### Modernist design hegemony

Pioneer Modernism was to further codify the Modern as morally, spiritually and politically uplifting, and, as a conceptual foil “*the detail as negativity*”. Towards the end of the 1920s until around 1933, Pioneer Modernism suffered a demise with the closure of the seminal Fine Art and Design School the Bauhaus. Subsequently the “*simple, undecorated, utilitarian*” (Greenhalgh cited in Julier, 1993, p. 98 ). ‘International Style’ described the aesthetics of the diasporic modern movement.<sup>88</sup> Its influence on the British liberal middle classes is amply illustrated in the ongoing promotion of such work and attendant philosophies in *The Guardian* newspaper from at least the end of the 1950s.<sup>89</sup>

The Modernist project was curtailed by the eruption of mass and popular culture and the vernacular into fine art, design and architecture, the ultimate failure of, for example, utopian Modernist public building projects and the totalising Greenburgian view of modern art. Modernism remains

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women... *The detail does not occupy a conceptual space beyond the laws of sexual difference: the detail is gendered and doubly gendered as feminine*” (Schor, 1987, p. 4).

<sup>85</sup> Wright points out that platform heels are the sole exception to this rule.

<sup>86</sup> Barnard following Flugel defined this as “*The Great Masculine Renunciation*” (ibid. p. 122).

<sup>87</sup> As men’s attire was Modernised, women’s garments became more elaborate, more decorative and restrictive. Barnard has noted that in cultural terms masculinity became the spectator or voyeur, femininity became reduced to appearance or spectacle. (Barnard, 1991, p. 123). Berger’s germinal text *Ways of Seeing* is considered the first to develop this theme, which would become a central paradigm for feminism: that “*Men look- women appear*” (Berger, 1972, p. 47).

<sup>88</sup> In a mythologised moment, the Bauhaus alumna staff including Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe emigrated to Britain and the US. Julier amongst many others has charted how “*Many of the designs that they had developed during the 1920s and which expressed their aesthetic aims went into wider mass production during the 1930s – Thonet, Pel, Knoll Herman Miller and Isokon were all important producers of furniture by torchbearers of Pioneer Modernism – thus disseminating its style*” (Julier, 1993, p. 105).

<sup>89</sup> Alongside Modern Scandinavian design, Bauhaus style architecture, interiors, furniture and other products became the house-style of the broadsheet particularly on the Women’s Page under the enthusiastic patronage of Mary Stott. Caroline Cox has noted that Vidal Sassoon’s fascination with Bauhaus philosophies, particularly after meeting Mies van der Rohe in New York in the early 1960s led to his re-visiting of the ‘first’ functional hairstyle, the 1920s bob and henceforth declared his goal “*to be the ridding of the superfluous in hair design... [and working with] the innate properties of the hair*”. In contrast to the artifice that typified 1950s stylings (Cox, 1999, p. 123).



powerful and pervasive to say the very least, in visual and consumer culture and education and remains the preferred model in the continued ministering of the middle classes on issues of taste.<sup>90</sup>

Modernism had always sustained an evangelical tone, that design had a moral dimension and had the ability to transform consciousness (Greenhalgh cited in Julier, 1993, p. 132).<sup>91</sup> Monumentally successful, with truly global penetration: “*The look of the modern environment is unthinkable without it*” (Whitford, 1984, p. 200). Although there have been some critiques of the gender of Modernism,<sup>92</sup> literature that deals with how feminism, gender, class, taste and Modernism intersect are scant, for example, there is no empirical data to illustrate the possible ways that Modernism was adopted or rejected by feminists in terms of fashion, interior design, typography, and, as McRobbie has indicated, there is little in the way of detail on working-class women’s tastes and habits of consumption to indicate their relationship to it. However, feminist critics, notably Schor, have begun to map what might be at stake for some women and minority ethnic groups in the relentless promotion of first avant-garde then institutionalised Modernist style where the decorative, the detail and the ornament are synonymous with the vulgar, the uncivilised and crime.<sup>93</sup>

### Fashioning feminism, lesbianism and modernism

Women were amongst the Modernist designers committed to dress reform as Second-Wave feminist historians have re/discovered<sup>94</sup> and, as this thesis argues, alliances between Modernist style and feminism are ubiquitous. In Britain during and after the Second World War, the government sanctioned Modernism through the Utility system emphasising as it did “*function above any other design criteria, equating ‘good design’ with a non-ornamental style*” – and the masculinisation of design (Wright, 1989, p. 9). Wright has discussed how simultaneously a new femininity was forged.

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<sup>90</sup> Lucy Lippard noted a sea change when, in the early 1960s “*the male artist moved into women’s domain and pillaged with impunity. The result was pop art, the most popular American art movement ever... If the first major pop artists had been women, the movement might never have got out of the kitchen*” (Lippard cited in Whiting, 1997, p. 1). Greenberg’s influence on Modern Art and Art criticism cannot be overestimated. His contempt for low culture and kitsch in particular can be gleaned from his 1961 essay, *Avant Garde and Kitsch in Art and Culture*. The Bauhaus’s pedagogical model is still in widespread use in British Fine Art and Design institutions as is Gombrich’s *The Story of Art*, an often mandatory Art School textbook that baldly states that Modernism “*helped us to get rid of much unnecessary and tasteless knick-knackery...*” (Gombrich, 1972, p. 445). Cecile Whiting has demonstrated how the proliferation of Interior Design and homemaking advice targeted at the middle classes in the 1950s in America had disseminated aspirational messages endorsing Modernist style typically that “*understatement is always the greatest taste – the avoidance of gaudy junk or spurious values in everything. Real taste despises the vulgar in anything*” (Pahlmann cited in Whiting, 1997, p. 58). She has also noted that the bourgeois apogee of the dream of a modernist interior was realised in the design of the Playboy Weekend Hideaway: glass walls, Charles Eames furniture and Abstract Expressionism (Whiting, 1997, pp. 91-93). This has an enduring resonance and is currently the house style of the deeply fashionable lifestyle and design magazine *Wallpaper*.

<sup>91</sup> Its utopianism made it the style of choice for the rising Fascism in Germany, Soviet regimes and US corporate capitalism.

<sup>92</sup> For example, Andreas Huyssen’s ‘Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other’ in *After the great divide, Modernism, mass culture postmodernism* (1986).

<sup>93</sup> One of the touchstones for the Modernist canon is Adolf Loos’s essay *Ornament and Crime* (1908).

<sup>94</sup> For example Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy (Goody, 1999) Sonia Delauney and the Bauhaus’s Annelise Albers (Whitford, 1984, p. 209).



Producers deployed foreignness or exoticism in their address to consumers, whether 'Paris fashions' or 'Italianess' as in the case of the branding of the stiletto in the mid-1950s (Wright, *ibid.*). The snapshots presented of Britain in this period in contemporary texts and in analyses by feminist researchers illustrates the dichotomy of idealised demure, middle-class British reserve in all aspects of fashioning, contrasted with a burgeoning world of feminine glamour epitomised both by Hollywood stars and notions of 'Catholic' European exoticism (Stacey, 1994; Kirkham, 1995, p. 19; Wright, 1989).<sup>95</sup>

Parisian *haute couture* had embraced Modernist taste; the early work of Chanel had come to exemplify Modernist Fashion.<sup>96</sup> Evans and Thornton have pointed out what was at stake in Chanel's approach and by extension broader applications of Modernism: "*the functionalist or anti decorative move in art and design may indicate a cultural rejection of the feminine in favour of an exclusively masculine model of power*" (*ibid.*). It is this will towards the apparent functionalism/ authenticity of the masculine model inherent in Modernism that appears to be mirrored in at least the interpretations of accounts of Second-Wave feminist fashioning: "*In the rejection of certain items belonging to the women's sartorial code, adoption of those thought inherently masculine has been sought: examples of the 1970s are flat-heeled shoes and dungarees*" (Wright, 1989, p. 7).

Barbara Creed (1995) has written about the lesbian body/community of the 1970s and found a constituency "*obsessed with [masculinised] appearance*" (Creed, 1995, p. 101) fearful of marking in any way an association with heterosexual femininity or capitalism:

The proper lesbian had short hair, wore sandshoes, jeans or a boiler suit, flannel shirt and rejected all forms of make-up. In appearance she hovered somewhere between the look of the butch lesbian [...] and the tomboy. She was a dyke – not a butch – whose aim was to capture an androgynous uniformed look. Lesbians who rejected this model were given a difficult time (Creed, 1995, p. 102).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Such excessive fashionings are antithetical to the stylings of International and later Scandinavian Modernism. The moralising inherent in Modernism can be linked to the post war political and social climate in that "*The underlying fear of the guardians of national and public morality was that the desires liberated during the war might be refuelled and fanned in a period of relative affluence – that the working class, eager to consume after a decade of deprivation, would not be able to discern 'good' from 'bad'. 'Good taste' was posed against 'bad taste' not least in terms of clothes*" (Kirkham, 1995, p. 19).

<sup>96</sup> Her aim was "*to dispense with superfluous detail and decoration, and to espouse the cause of functionalism*" (Evans and Thornton, 1991, p. 50). In an article discussing the complex history of the boyish bob hairstyle, Steven Zdatny notes that Chanel's first works as a couturier were dubbed 'poor boy' designs, illustrating an aspect of Modernism, that still thrives in Conran's empire and beyond, where bourgeois taste apes an idealised ascetic 'taste' of the rural, poor.

<sup>97</sup> Faderman suggests disingenuousness at work in the field of feminism, lesbianism and fashioning in the 1970s when she stated "*although butch and femme were 'politically incorrect' in the lesbian-feminist community, everyone looked butch.*" (Faderman cited in Ainley and Cooper, 1994, p. 43).



In a fascinating appraisal of the work of Susan Sontag, McRobbie examined both the *styling* and the oeuvre of the author. McRobbie begins her essay with a description of an individual symbolising a paradigm for female Modernist/Left self-fashioning:

It is an image formed in the early sixties, immune to and perhaps beyond fashion (no earrings, no hairstyles) and sustained twenty, almost thirty years later. The picture is inevitably in black and white [...] It is an image which combines sinewy female strength with casual elegance. Thick dark hair, same style at varying lengths, dark eyes, olive complexion, square jaw, virtually no make-up. On the cover of the collection of short stories *I. Etcetera* (1978) she is shown full length, in black trousers, black polo neck and wearing Chelsea boots [...] At home, with books, wearing black (McRobbie 1991, p. 1).

McRobbie interprets Sontag's scholarship and personal style as signifying her (Sontag's) taste for the European high art culture and her disdain for American mass and popular culture, which *"serves the function of reminding us we have of the value of 'mind as passion'"*. Sontag's style is ultimately interpreted as being outmoded, her commitment to *"...abstraction and clean, fluid lines, uncluttered by the detail and messiness of everyday life, were soon swallowed up, not by corporate culture, but by a dawning recognition that it was increasingly the messiness of everyday life which provided the richest source of raw materials for art and pop alike"* (McRobbie, 1991, p. 18). However, Sontag's image is one minted in a classical mould, whilst the cultural challenges to abstraction have arguably resulted in few figures moving into the academic limelight fashioned as Modernism's other.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> McRobbie reads the garments of Sontag as black, and yet is aware that the photograph under scrutiny is a black and white image. This thesis does not allow for a thorough discussion of the Modernist dis/approbation for Hollywood Technicolor and monochrome New Wave cinema for aspirant working-class and middle-class audiences respectively but I would argue that these cinematic tastes may have influenced sartorial choices in the post war period. Little research has been conducted on the links between the British music and sartorial movement of Mods from the 1960s on the broader Modernist design and fine art fields. Hebdige devoted only two pages to Mods in his influential *Subculture* (1979, pp. 552-54). However, Weller and Hewitt have made a case for Mod style being principally a working-class phenomenon and, in ways that are reminiscent of Partington's claims re. working-class women and the New Look, a look appropriated, then fused and mixed with an array of 'inappropriate' sources; the fashioning of black soul heroes, Italian and American Ivy League style, vernacular and upper-class English tailoring... *"that taxi driver look, all bright colours and tomfoolery (jewellery)... like a golfer or Bruce Forsyth or something"* (Sampson cited in Hewitt, 2000, p. 149). Significantly, the early years of Mod(ernist) fashionings do not reflect consumer bondage to big fashion houses, although this may have been the case following the success of *Ready Steady Go* which, according to Hewitt *"nationalised mod"* (Hewitt, 2000, p. 69) but the production of a complex hybrid take on the strictures of unadorned high Modernism, juxtaposing classic linear, pared-down forms with dandy-like eruptions of colour, texture and where *"Detail is all"* (ibid. p. 73). Like their counterparts in fine art, design and architecture, the little literature that exists charting the development of Mod fashionings focuses on men, women in Mod culture *"remained on the periphery"* (ibid. p. 16).



## Black perspectives on fashioning femininity

This thesis has benefited from insights concerning fashioning, identifications, expressions of fashioning to excess and style politics from scholarship on Black cultures and Black music, the testimonies of Black stars and specific texts by white writers, in particular popular music critics who have been in the vanguard in acknowledging and examining the impact of Black cultures on white British life in the post-war period. The importance of issues of ethnicity to historical, social and cultural accounts of fashioning glamour has only recently begun to be charted. Barbara Trepagnier has stated that Black women are inextricably linked to white women in the complex phenomenon of women's identities being defined "*primarily through their relationships with their bodies*" (Trepagnier 1994 p. 199).<sup>99</sup> The relationship of notions of the exotic and otherness to constructions of glamour is absolutely indissoluble from both mainstream and counter-cultural fashion; however, empirical accounts of cross- ethnic self- fashionings are rare. Insofar as audience research is concerned, its partiality is evident; the (dis)pleasurable identifications between Black audiences and media remain largely untheorised.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the literature on fashioning and women of colour, for example the Black British experience of fashion consumption and negotiation, has yet to be adequately addressed.<sup>101</sup> Quest (1985) have suggested that consciousness-raising, an important component in the development of individual feminists and feminist inspired research, failed to accommodate the voices of black women.<sup>102</sup> Both feminist film studies and cultural studies have failed to expand to any extent feminist knowledge on audiences of women of colour, an exception being the work of Jacqueline Bobo (1995)<sup>103</sup> Romance, glamour and whiteness are inextricably bound in the media. Although work on

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<sup>99</sup> "Very few women can satisfy the requirements of 'beauty' perpetrated in Western societies; however, since the standard of beauty portrayed in the mass media designates whiteness, black women are presumably at a disadvantage. For that reason, black women are likely to play a role in the construction of white women's 'body identified identities'" (Trepagnier, 1994, p. 199) Stevi Jackson has stated that "in order for women to reach the place where she takes pleasure as a woman, a long detour by way of the analysis of the various systems of oppression brought to bear on her is assuredly necessary" (Jackson, 1996, p. 82). The unremarkability of whiteness and its relationship to forms of femininity has occluded its own undeniable relevance to these debates. Whiteness has only begun to be interrogated and theorised at the end of the twentieth century, see Richard Dyer's 1997 volume *White*.

<sup>100</sup> Although 'real' audiences voices are not incorporated, Nataf has usefully added to debates on Black lesbian spectatorship in popular cinema. (Nataf, 1995, pp. 57-81)

<sup>101</sup> A useful exception here is Inge Blackman and Kathryn Perry's article on lesbian fashion in the 1990s that includes empirical material on Black lesbian fashionings, confronting racist expectations of 'what lesbians look like' (Blackman and Perry, 1990).

<sup>102</sup> "It is a valuable cornerstone of feminist theory and practice. But as a verbal exercise in self-examination and group sharing, it is also an approach with a class and race bias. White middle-class women are comfortable with a form that relies on mainly verbal skills... the formality of using CR as a technique for communication is stifling and intimidating to women who are accustomed to expressing themselves in many less defined and directed forms" (Quest cited in Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 105).

Researchers including Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis have undertaken empirical work and in her analysis of Black beauty salons Joseph reports that they have "long been a stronghold for the dissemination of facts about men and about women's involvements with men. Comments about mistreatment from men the sweetness of men, two-timing men and faithful women are topics that typically elicit animated conversations" (Gloria I. Joseph, cited in Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 68).

<sup>103</sup> Stacey and Radway's studies focussed on white audiences and white "fantasises of becoming are based on a sense of possible inclusion within white ideals of romance, glamour and sexuality" (Stacey, 1994, p. 239).



Black audiences for music in the post war period requires attention, the importance of Black music stars for white audiences is apparent in many post-war accounts. In her summary of the impact of Black culture on British tastes in this period, Craik (1994) has interpreted the impact of Black fashion as a fusion of difference and allure for white British youth, rehearsing Modernism's paradoxical relationship with the other. The historical frame of the 1940s to the 1990s constructed in biographical, journalistic and musical texts are imbricated with references to both Americanness, and *Blackness* spanning the development of Black music in Britain from race music to soul and rock. Val Wilmer remembered the 1960s as the point when Black music, popular in Britain for over a century in forms 'tailored for whites' was superseded by the experience of "*the authenticity of African- American vernacular performance*' by blues and gospel artists '*changing the musical climate for ever*' (Wilmer, 1995, p. 62).

Embodying as they did an unequivocal affront to the fashioning of demure British femininity, it is significant that it was a Motown girl group, the Marvelettes who with *Please Mr Postman* who were to pioneer the pop girl group, (Black to white) cross-over record that "*totally seduced the white record buying public*" first in America then in Britain (Whitall, 1998, p. 51).<sup>104</sup> Although such fascination can be discredited as racist, this research is an attempt to begin to understand how such memories of difference, identification and cross-cultural fascination can be considered as yielding positive evidence of intimacies, despite contemporary racist and misogynist discourses, between femininities.<sup>105</sup> Wilmer's vivid account of first encountering konking and processing can now be contextualised by theoretical and empirical research that reveals a spectrum of meanings of such hair fashioning for African Americans.<sup>106</sup> Craig's work is part of a broader field of scholarship on the meanings of Black hair following a germinal text by Kobena Mercer *Black hair/ Style politics* (1994). Mercer called for

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<sup>104</sup> Soon after to be covered on the Beatles second album.

The glamour, abundant femininity and otherworldliness British female cinema goers associated with American female stars is linked in Wilmer's memories with both female and male Black American musicians from the late 1950s: "*The Claytonites* [touring Britain in 1959] *like other Americans, seemed almost like people from another planet, with their fine clothes and jewellery and the smell of cologne that wafted around them [...] Racism was temporarily shelved in the face of genuine wonderment at the gods being here in our midst*" (Wilmer, 1989, pp. 34-40). Forms of feminine excess have of course been developed in an almost canonical fashion in voice, costuming and self-fashioning by black jazz and male soul performers from this period on, for example, Little Richard, Smokey Robinson, Michael Jackson, Bootsy Collins, George Clinton, Prince and Puff Daddy.

<sup>105</sup> Wilmer remembered the glamour, or feminine excess embodied by Black (male) artists in the 1950s and 1960s and its troubling effect on normative gender assumptions. The appeal such forms of femininity might have had is evoked in this extract: "[Jimmy Cotton] '*konked*' his hair too, and wore it '*high*' in a black tradition of personal adornment [...] *splendid enough to impress English people who has never seen the effect outside publicity photos of Little Richard. With his fingers he moulded Marcel Waves deep in his Vaseline'd 'process', keeping it in place at night with a head-wrap... There was something distinctly 'feminine' about these blues-men who preferred the soft-waved look and manicured hands. It puzzled white male writers, who got hung up on theories of sexual ambiguity and were rather embarrassed by this apparently less than macho streak in their idols. Yet I understood it when such men talked about 'keeping themselves pretty' for women; it was a reaction against the calluses of the field-hand and the grimy, broken nails of the assembly line*" (Wilmer, 1989, p. 69).

<sup>106</sup> Such fashioning has been variously interpreted as indicating hustlers, entertainers, intimidating respectability "*a badge of street masculinity*" effeminacy, dissidence and oppression (Craig 1997; Mercer, 1994; Akuba, 1997; hooks, 1997).



the *depsychologising* of the question of hair straightening in favour of recognising hair styling, “for what it is, a specifically cultural activity and practice” (Mercer, 1994, p. 101).<sup>107</sup> He defined two logics of black hair stylisation: “one emphasising natural looks, the other involving straightening to emphasise artifice.”<sup>108</sup>

The forms of radical femininity performed by music stars in the 1950s and 1960s, that provided a model for British stars Dusty Springfield, Lulu, Mick Jagger and the Beatles amongst others were generated by African American vocalists of the 1960s including Martha Reeves and Ronnie Spector (who claims black, Cherokee and Irish heritage) leader of the girl group the Ronnettes. Ronnie fashioned herself on feminine forms that were pleurably consumed, and remembered iconically by her, as working- class and ethnic:

I grew up in a family of different races. And I loved my look, even though I got beat up a lot and my braids were cut off in school... And when I got with the Ronettes, we didn't do like the Supremes. Our hair would be up in those big beehives, with intentions for it to fall down during the show. I always made sure the pin wasn't tight. I loved getting messy... I got all my ideas by looking out of my Grandmother's window on Amsterdam Avenue [New York] seeing all the Spanish girls with cigarettes and big hair. I loved that tough look; that's what I wanted (Spector, 1997).

And Greig has pointed out that cross-ethnic identifications were to become a component in the burgeoning of TV pop in America where dancers in the audience for shows like *Bandstand* were a source of pleasures and fascination for (female) viewers, who noted their hairstyles, clothes and dance routines.<sup>109</sup>

By the 1970s, the critical attention to the rise of white rock overshadowed many other forms of popular music that nonetheless continued to sell well. According to Greig “*Nowhere were the*

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<sup>107</sup> Mercer contested that the processing of hair socialised it “making it the medium of significant statements about self and society and the codes of value that bind them or do not” (Mercer, *ibid.*).

<sup>108</sup> This binary opposition, where artifice occupies the degraded or negative instance, is rhetorically linked, in this thesis to the paradigmatic definition of Modernist taste (versus popular/feminine taste) and the analysis of (good) feminist taste versus (bad) feminine artifice to be found in Second-Wave feminist politics. Mercer's research sought to interrogate hair meanings beyond a political impasse that endorsed such binary oppositions with respect to Black hair. Significantly, Robin Morgan used the Black hair processing analogy to address women who have not had their consciousness raised (Morgan, 1970, p. xvii). But Robin D.G Kelley (1997) following Mercer rejected the simplistic ‘taming of the bush’ narrative demonstrating how hair fashioning can have political and social meaning, for example “*More than dashikis, platform shoes, black berets and leather jackets, the Afro has clearly been the most powerful symbol of black style politics*” (Kelley, 1997, p. 339) but that its power is both mobile and subject to historical reinterpretations and glossing. Kelley recorded that “*The afro has partial roots in bourgeois high fashion circles in the late 1950s and was seen by the black and white elite as a kind of new female exotica*” (Kelley, 1997, p. 341). Angela Davis has written about her own iconic status as ‘The Afro’ (Davis, 1998).

<sup>109</sup> “*They seemed to represent a channel of communication between the performers and the viewers, black or white, promising an easy passage between the two worlds for future generations*” (Grieg, 1989, pp. 28-29).



*consequences of white rock's imperialism more devastating than for women involved in the music business either as fans or as artists. For the first time, women, particularly black women were being pushed out to the picture altogether*" (Greig, 1989, p. 130).<sup>110</sup> Greig has interpreted the timing of the excommunication of women from serious music criticism as 'ironic', mapping over as it did the first surge of Second-Wave feminist activism in America. Black female stars were subordinated despite the phenomenal success of Diana Ross and the volume of sales attributable in the main to her young female fan base. Here, feminist music criticism and politics can be said to have held a consensual stance to mainstream, left-leaning music critics who interpreted such consumption as false consciousness, or tasteless, performed by unreconstructed agents of capitalism (and patriarchy). According to Greig, the achievements of female performers through the 1950s and 60s

was lost on the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s who saw in girls groups only a reflection of society's expectations of women: subservience to a male ideal of female sexuality, intellectual dependence, and a foolish romanticism that hid not the longing for real equality and love between man and women but a pernicious ideology of patriarchy (Greig 1989, p.131).

The racism of the music press might not be the only reason why Janis Joplin and Diana Ross be read as good and bad respectively. Their performances of specific extra musical forms of in/appropriate feminine excess, and Ross's popularity with working-class audiences (of women) are also likely factors. Greig cites Barbara Ehrenreich's pronouncement on Joplin: "*There were no other female singers during the sixties who reached her pinnacle of success*" (ibid. p124) as typifying feminist denial of the popularity Black star's achievements.<sup>111</sup> She has also pinpointed the neglect by feminists of the agency in intimacies between the femininities shared between popular female stars and

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<sup>110</sup> Despite the significance of their contribution to popular music, girl groups who made hits in the 1960s are now involved in litigious battles to be remunerated for and gain ownership of their work. Their efforts are being led by the Ronnettes. In the 1950s and 1960s "*it was the exception rather than the rule if they [girl groups] were paid*" (Krum, 1998).

<sup>111</sup> In fact, the Supremes had thirty hit singles during the 1960s and 1970s, Joplin had one, in 1971.

In his obituary of Judy Clay, his prodigiously talented partner in the first racially mixed duo in the US, Billy Vera notes the significance of their precedent for Black African Americans and the disdain they encountered from 'limousine liberals': "*Given today's unfortunate state of race relations in the US it is hard to imagine what an act like ours meant to an older generation of black Americans, to whom integration and assimilation were goals. I recall coming off stage one night after we had stopped the show – and being forced to do an encore of Storybook Children – and seeing Judy's 'aunt' Cissy Houston crying tears of joy and hope in the wings, with her four year old daughter Whitney in her arms [...]* We were never taken up as a cause by the limousine liberals of the day. This may have something to do with the fact that our audience was mostly everyday blacks and working-class whites. Our music was just plain old soul, so the hippie culture found nothing in us to connect with. We didn't wear leather fringe vests and bell-bottom jeans. Judy went in floor length gowns and my outfits were mohair continental suits. We played the Apollo in Harlem not the Fillmore East. And that was just fine with the un-chic bridge and tunnel crowd and the Harlemites, who gave us standing ovations, even as bloody riots were taking place across the Hudson River in Newark, New Jersey" (Vera, 2001, p. 24)



their fans: *"There was a period when almost every girl, black or white, saw something of her aspirations towards hip sophistication in the Supremes."* (ibid.)<sup>112</sup>

## Camp and the queering of femininity

Wilson has stated that *"by the end of the nineteenth century, flamboyant clothing for men was coded as irredeemably effeminate, and associated with homosexuality"* (Wilson, 1990, p. 69). But Whiting identifies the rise of Warhol, Pop Art and an attendant critical article by Vivian Gornick in 1966, as the moment when camp came out of the closet.<sup>113</sup> A year later Sontag's *Notes on Camp* was published. McRobbie's reading of this germinal text situates Sontag's analysis in relation to the subsequent camp cultural hegemony. McRobbie stated that, for her *"Camp can never be confused with realism or with the search for authenticity [...] everything is done with a nuance or an edge or, as Sontag puts it 'in quotation marks'"* (McRobbie, 1991, p. 11).<sup>114</sup> McRobbie detected the note of condescension so palpably present in the 'nouveau drag' of queer culture, playing with low cultural forms of femininity and 'trash culture' when she concluded that *"The drift of this [Sontag's] essay [...] is to reward camp for all its striving, with the seal of approval, from 'the high ground'"* (McRobbie, ibid.).<sup>115</sup> By the mid- sixties, camp was indubitably the preserve of gay men and both Sontag and Steinem had anointed 'homosexuals', specifically Warhol's brand of gay bohemianism, as the vanguard (Whiting, 1997, p. 179).

After the resurgence of feminist political activity in the 1970s in Britain and America, the debates on the feminist or feminine fashioned body in Women's Studies was subsumed in the proliferation of theory on, for example, women's language, literature and space. Coincident and intersecting with the rise of the Second-Wave, lesbian and gay politics established a more mainstream

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<sup>112</sup> The exploitation of Black performers, writers and labels, in the explosion of the popular music industry in the 1950s and 1960s, makes it problematic to read white women performers work with forms originated by Black performers in anything other than a critical light. Whilst acknowledging that racism has been and continues to operate on all levels of the music business, it is important that pleasurable and I would argue here, feminist and radical identifications for both Black and white performers and audiences are acknowledged, and interrogated in their specific historical contexts, particularly in the light of the continual relegation of both white and Black (female) soul performers under the authenticity of (male white) rock stars. Black feminist insights contribute much to debates on femininity and feminism and offer up perspectives that challenge normative approaches to research in this field: *"Most Black women still do not receive the respect and treatment- mollycoddling and condescending as it sometimes is- afforded white women. So when these Black women complain about not wanting to lose their femininity, they are referring to something quite different"* (Joseph cited in Kramarae and Treichler, 1985, p. 157).

<sup>113</sup> Gornick's article 'It's a queer hand stroking the campfire' in *The Village Voice*, 7 April, 1966, cited in Whiting, 1997. Gornick's traced, in a misogynistic and homophobic manner the rise of an art form that threatened to *"undermine the standards of high art"* Gornick casts camp as, *"a homosexual aesthetic based on feminine bad taste"* (Gornick cited in Whiting, 1997, p. 179).

<sup>114</sup> McRobbie noted that, camp *"sponsors playfulness. Camp is the other of Modernism"* (McRobbie, ibid.).

<sup>115</sup> This message is rehearsed again in the camp and queer literature that flourished from the late 1980s, for example, in his guide to camp films Paul Roen stated *"The truly cultivated are the fortunate few who are able to perceive and savour the virtues of 'bad' taste as well as 'good'"* (Roen, 1994, p. 9).



visibility. By the 1980s in Britain, in part as a reaction to the extremes of Thatcherite attempts to suppress lesbian and gay representations and so-called pretend family relationships, and in the States, the radicalism of ACT UP and Queer Nation in the face of UK and US government complacency on HIV/AIDS, camp developed a strident, queer political dimension where camp instances by the 'un-queer' were regarded as "*examples of the appropriation of queer praxis*" (Meyer, 1994, p. 1) and fashioning femininity became a queer debate on *femme*.<sup>116</sup> In cultural terms feminine excess subsequently became somewhat paradoxically, an endorsement of the so-called authenticity of drag queens, rather than any form of *female* agency. The musical and performative pleasures and consumption by female fans of performances of femininity by Dusty Springfield, Shirley Bassey, Donna Summer, Judy Garland or Dolly Parton were vigorously claimed by gay male culture.

In the initial stages of this research, attempting 'to name the something that feminine excess expresses' I had unsuccessfully attempted to examine femininity from the perspective of camp. I concluded, on the basis of the literature and on routine responses to the research project, that camp was irretrievably over-determined as a gay male trope. Its function in academic literature by the mid 1990s held no reasonable promise for the analysis of, for example, working-class women's pleasures in self-fashioning.<sup>117</sup> In her subsequently published project to define the positive effects of feminist camp with the telling title, *Guilty Pleasures*, Pamela Robertson noted "*feminist camp tends to speak from and to a working-class sensibility*" (Robertson, 1996, p. 18). Robertson's commitment to the project of recuperating *camp* from the domain of men rather obscures the fact that fashioning *feminine excess* in the post-war period, insofar as British visual culture is concerned, had unquestionably been principally the 'work' of women.<sup>118</sup>

Stern discovered an historical consistency in objections to artifice that were a paradigm for both patriarchal and feminist rhetoric against the cosmetic acts.<sup>119</sup> This condition, where feminine

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<sup>116</sup> David Bergman has articulated a commonplace understanding that it is "*a style of objects or the way objects are perceived that favours 'exaggeration', 'artifice' and 'extremity', in tension with popular culture, and that the person who recognises camp or can camp is a person outside the cultural mainstream*" (Bergman, 1993, p. 5). Moe Meyer, in an anthology that captured the zeitgeist, spoke of reclaiming the discourse of camp, and unambiguously defines it as outside the ken of those who don't self-identify as queer: "*Camp is political; camp is a solely a queer (and/or sometimes gay and lesbian) discourse [...] in other words the un-queer do not have access to the discourse of Camp, only to derivatives constructed through the act of appropriation*" (Meyer, 1994, p. 1).

<sup>117</sup> Rather, for critics like Carole Anne Tyler "*and many theorists on the left*" camp and masquerade were advocated as a consciously entered into "*postmodern strategy for the subversion of phallogocentric identities and desires*" (Tyler, 1991, p. 32).

<sup>118</sup> *Guilty Pleasures* was in essence an attempt to retrieve stars "*from Mae West to Madonna*" from the gay male pantheon and recognise these figures as important for female audiences, in this case, without recourse to empirical research with women. Notwithstanding Robertson's work, the fashioning of a spectrum of forms of feminine excess, performed routinely by a significant number of women, collapsed, in cultural terms, into a gay male prerogative in the post-war period.

<sup>119</sup> Stern illustrates the mainstream subordination of femininity by citing Bloch and Sohm. Bloch's study of medieval misogyny sees femininity in the detail and the decorative and ultimately in all symbolic activity. Although Stern's project questions the notion of femininity's absolute synonymy with false consciousness, her perspective suggested that there could be no real claims



excess appears validated within academia as at no earlier time, opens up questions for research as Schor has suggested

Has the detail achieved its new prestige by being taken over by the masculine, triumphing at the very moment when it cease to be associated with the feminine, or ceasing to be connoted as feminine at the very moment when it is taken up by the male –dominated cultural establishment? (Schor, 1987, p. 8).<sup>120</sup>

Stern's arguments in favour of men and women's right to play in the powder-room, appeared contingent on an ironic knowingness of making up. There is no recalling of the continuity of validation of working-class femininity as recalled by Wilson's memories of The Gateways, when middle-class would-be Bohemians had little to do with 'anachronistic' butch and femmes. And Barbara Creed has noted that in the political lesbian communities of the 1970s: "*there was certainly no place for femme or older style butch lesbians*" (Creed, 1995, p. 102). It was working-class lesbians in the 1950s who sustained a dissident femininity, but the representation of lipstick lesbianism from the early 1990s privileged an academic, post-modern, play with signifiers of femme and where class had apparently evaporated.<sup>121</sup>

### **Constructions of fashioned femininity and feminism in post-war feminist and mainstream media**

The use of fashioning to produce an image of self on a desired point on the spectrum of femininity can be said to be a compelling drive "*a state to be constantly sought*" for women in the post-war period (Black and Sharma, 2000, p. 100). The analysis of texts on fashioning and femininity, directed specifically at girls and women, reveal orthodoxies of both idealised and inappropriate forms

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for the importance of femininity disengaged from the twinned form of effeminacy. Stern's article, although welcome in that it is a rare example of an attempt to resuscitate a discussion of femininity in contemporary feminist scholarship, reflected a broader tendency to attempt to privilege men's Butlerian performances of femininity. Women's more widespread uses of femininity are invariably overshadowed in queer texts since men's performances are deemed more sexualised, radical and, well, queer to post-modern readers.

<sup>120</sup> One illustration will have to suffice here to stand for the ubiquity of this camp, queer turn and its easy absorption as a media friendly depoliticised trope in contemporary culture. Richard Corliss of *Time* states of the Miss America Pageant: "*The Miss America show shares with those made for TV spectacles the lure of unpredictable thrills and gaffes, adventure and ennui. It's gaudy, its fake, it's real, it's live! We hate it. We love it!*" (Corliss cited in Martin and Wilson, 2000).

<sup>121</sup> Whilst Dusty and other female stars in the gay male pantheon performed political, social and cultural points of identification for gay men (and for the ultimate in this genre of Dusty hagiographies see Evans, 1995) women's identifications whilst still inadequately represented in the literature remained inflected with the legacy of Freudian interpretations by which all forms of identification are interpreted as narcissistic processes, complicit with patriarchy. Female to *female* identification of any kind, in circumstances where research on women identifying with other women is concerned, might be read as tending to reproduce "*sameness, fixity and the confirmation of existing identities*" (Stacey, 1994, pp. 132-133).



of femininity that, paradoxically, demonstrate their permeability and transience when read at different historical moments. Texts and images produced in the same historical timeframe, but addressed at readers of different ages, classes or sexualities reveal further multiple contradictions in any attempt to define or fix femininity. Representations of femininity are pervasive, a point well made by feminists in the early 1970s. This thesis draws on diverse sources in order to attempt to understand and offer up some analysis of femininity and feminism, and to contextualise data generated by research participants. Arguably the two most significant popular feminist inspired texts whereby readers might have derived an understanding of feminist dis/tastes in fashioning in the post-war period are *Spare Rib* and *The Guardian's Women's Page*.<sup>122</sup> Since these texts are cited at intervals in the thesis I have included a brief review of them below. Additional texts examined for this thesis included primary sources on women's and feminist music, LP cover designs, pamphlets and songbooks from the Women's Liberation movement in Britain and other ephemeral texts. Mapping the period researched on *The Guardian Women's Page* and *Spare Rib*, I have attempted to analyse constructions of femininity as they appeared in comic, music, dance, film and TV and Royal and beauty annuals.

### *Spare Rib*

The key British Women's Liberation newspapers/magazines were *Shrew* (1969) *WIRES* (1975) and *Spare Rib* (1972) (Humm 1995, p252)<sup>123</sup> *Shrew* was a sparky, hand-typed and occasionally hand-written and illustrated polemical feminist newspaper produced by a different women's liberation group each issue. Occasional issues were themed. *WIRES*, based in Leeds, was a twice monthly newsletter established to facilitate communication between sister groups and individuals. Both *Shrew* and *WIRES* were distributed in small and sporadic numbers, with a hand-crafted format and means of reproduction, and had alternative, open editorial approaches. In contrast, *Spare Rib* had an ambitious agenda to appeal to "women of all age groups and classes".<sup>124</sup> Its mission was "to put women's liberation on the news stands" (*Spare Rib* collective, no.80, July, 1987, p. 6). Initially "Influenced by women's liberation but not necessarily feminist" (ibid. p. 38) it took four years before the collective

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<sup>122</sup> Challenging what she has nominated, 'The Myth of Women's Lib', Polly Toynbee has stated "We were not the masses: we were *The Guardian women's page, Spare Rib magazine and a clutch of small alternative print.*" (Toynbee, 2002, p. 8).

<sup>123</sup> A rash of feminist magazines, journals and newsletters were launched in the late 1970s and early 1980s including the long running *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter* (1979) and *MsPrint* (1978) A Scottish feminist magazine *Nessie*, "The radical raddish frae Scotland" was a rough hewn newsletter launched in 1979. In the same year the scholarly journal *Feminist Review* was launched whose aim in Issue 1 was "To develop the theory of Women's Liberation and debate the political perspectives and strategy of the Movement. To be a forum for work and progress and current research and debates on women's studies". A further radical academic journal *Trouble and Strife* followed in 1983.

<sup>124</sup> Notwithstanding editor Marsha Rowe's statement to *Retail Newsagent* to promote the launch that it was aimed at "married women aged 30 with two children" (*Spare Rib* collective, no 80, July, 1987).



called itself 'a women's liberation magazine' (ibid. p. 39). Its format consciously attempted to both attract readers by appropriating and critiquing the format of mainstream women's magazines.<sup>125</sup> Its first issue, a run of 20,000, sold out and although its sales slumped in the first few years by 1976 it had grown steadily again to over 20,000 and remained the most widely read feminist magazine until its demise in 1992.<sup>126</sup>

Micheline Wandor had first suggested a Women's Liberation magazine but it was journalists Marsha Rowe and Louise Ferrier who convened a meeting to activate it.<sup>127</sup> Although initially co-edited by Rowe and Rosie Boycott, the magazine was soon run by a collective. It featured music, art, film and literature reviews, and dealt with diverse issues that were radical for their time, including lesbian motherhood, self-examination by speculum, schoolgirls in trousers, abortion, violence against women, political journalism including left political perspectives on union activism, Northern Ireland, Anti-apartheid campaigns, Palestine and so forth. Advertising, principally for music but also women-made products appeared throughout, alongside interviews with prominent women, from Simone de Beauvoir to Siouxsie Sioux although heroine worship was notionally frowned upon by editors and readers alike. Several articles addressed femininity, historical representations of the female body and women's 'looks'.<sup>128</sup> Early issues featured discussions between women involved in the music industry and interviews with alternative stars. Latterly, *Spare Rib* events or 'bops' are publicised and reviewed in the magazine. In the first decade at least, *Spare Rib* had an undeniably London-based, white, educated, middle-class address,<sup>129</sup> but also, to the credit of the many women who were to constitute the collectives throughout its run, critiques of this standpoint are raised and made visible by its readership which inevitably extends far more broadly than the scope of experience of its editors. In fact, the letters page of *Spare Rib* became mythologised for many *Rib* readers and non-*Rib* readers alike as a site in the years immediately before its demise for in many cases unresolved, frequently passionately/aggressively couched battles on issues including racism, anti-Semitism and Zionism, homophobia, class issues and pornography.

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<sup>125</sup> By including cooking, knitting and dressmaking patterns, make-up advice and the like but putting a *Spare Rib* spin on such features, for example, how to make home-made sanitary products. Mainstream women's magazines were routinely disparaged by feminists on the grounds of sexism and profiteering through the objectification of women.

<sup>126</sup> *Spare Rib*'s direct American counterpart, in terms of content and longevity was *Ms.* magazine, also launched in 1972. By the end of 1973 *Ms.* had monthly circulation of 350,000 and has been critiqued as "the voice of mainstream, liberal, American, feminism" (Tuttle, 1986, p. 210).

<sup>127</sup> Those invited were women already working on magazines and newspapers "of the counter culture" (Parker, 1979, p. 6).

<sup>128</sup> For example, articles appeared on long versus short hair, corsets, high heels and bras.

<sup>129</sup> An article by the collective states that before 1977 "the women were all white, mostly middle-class background, young and heterosexual" (Parker, 1979, p. 6).



## *The Guardian Women's Page*

*The (Manchester) Guardian*, launched in May 1821 was from the outset avowedly liberal, the paper's intention being "*the promotion of the liberal interest in the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre.*"<sup>130</sup> After 1959, when the paper changed its name to *The Guardian* a further expansion of its national readership followed. In 1964 the editor of the paper moved to London.

Whilst '*Guardian* reading' is frequently used in a derogatory or self-critical way as a description of woolly liberalism or the politically correct, *The Guardian's* Women's Page itself became a British institution, and, like its Radio 4 counterpart *Woman's Hour* is regarded as a loved or loathed British media phenomenon. Launched in the 1920s<sup>131</sup> under editor Madeline Linford the Women's Page was abandoned for 10 years during the paper shortages of wartime, reappearing again in 1951. Reflecting an anxiety about separatism that has been a recurrent featured debate with and outwith the paper itself the post war (1952) incarnation was re-titled, 'Mainly for women' and was intended to imply 'also for men' (Stott, 1963, p. 4). The Women's Page in its various guises typically appeared every week, frequently twice a week, in a distinctive format with regular features such as 'Talking to Women', launched in January 1962, where female staff writers at *The Guardian* had a column to spotlight their concerns.

Many *Guardian* readers and non-readers alike have views on the Women's Page, consequently it has connoted: the exemplar of liberal feminism, man-hating hokum, a fiercely contested 'women's place', a patronising acknowledgement that world issues are not women's issues, a window on bourgeois feminism, and a rare space for pioneering feminist journalism for and about women in an otherwise barren masculinised broadsheet landscape. There is evidence that *The Guardian* Women's Page phenomenon, a mythology whereby articles that subsequently scandalise the tabloids are routinely misattributed to it, seems to have been well established by 1962.<sup>132</sup> The following

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<sup>130</sup> And the growing campaign to repeal the Corn Laws that flourished in Manchester during this period. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian/article/0,5814,211600,00.html>) CP Scott embedded this philosophy in his 57-year editorship, typified in his article written for the paper's centenary issue in which he stated "*Comment is free. Facts are sacred... The voice of opponents no less than of friends has a right to be heard*" (ibid.).

<sup>131</sup> The BBC's *Woman's Hour* was launched in October 1946.

<sup>132</sup> Fiona MacCarthy has written that *Guardian* Women had entered the national consciousness by the end of the 1960s soon to spawn the less respectful '*Guardian* Wimmin' (MacCarthy, 2002). Long-time editor Mary Stott (editor 1957-1972) was strenuously countering Women's Page myths at this time. For example "*If there is an impression abroad that educated women find domesticity a trial it will inevitably be assumed that this applies to the educated woman who read The Guardian, for all I know, it may indeed apply to the majority, though I have better grounds than most for doubting it. All I ask is that when sociologists and others discuss the uneasy situation of the highly educated housewife and mother they should not quote as evidence of her discontent 'floods of letters' appearing in The Guardian's women's page, because THIS IS NOT TRUE*" (Stott 1962a). In the same month, in a theme that would run and run, Stott was made to debate whether the page should exist at all; "*We can get information about nest-building from the magazines? Certainly, but can we get what intelligent, educated women think about it?*" (Stott, 1962b).



year editor Stott appealed to readers to comment again on whether the Page was redundant.<sup>133</sup> The debate on the fate of the Women's Page recurred at regular intervals until a hiatus in 1974 when for a period it metamorphosed into the neutral or neutered 'Miscellany'. The name change was a bid by the then editor Linda Christmas to make it appear 'less separatist' (Shaw, 1974) - after which it was reinstated.

The Women's Page facilitated the launch, through its editorials and readers letters slot, of several national campaigning groups for women including the Housewives Register (1960) established to link intelligent, *Guardian* reading, housebound wives and the anti-nuclear-testing Voice of Women in the early 1960s. The Women's Page's address through the 1960s, reflecting that of *The Guardian* as a whole is to white, middle-class, left-leaning 'women like us' or, as Polly Walker put it, differentiating her ideal lodgers (from unsatisfactory, foreign ones): "*They are us. 'Guardian' types if you like to put it that way, professional people, teachers, civil servants, doctors and the like*" (Walker, 1963). In many ways the mythologizing of the '*Guardian* reader' is a phenomenon of the readers' making, clearly endorsed by the editorials on the Women's Page. In an update in 1962 on the progress of the Housewives Register, launched via the Women's Page readers letters slot two years earlier, the new national organiser Mrs Brenda Pows clarified that in the organisations' call for new members that 'like-minded' in fact meant '*Guardian* readers'. She spoke on behalf of the groups' founder Maureen Nichols who had originally put the call out to "*housebound wives with liberal interests*" (Nichol, 1962).

For the purposes of this thesis I researched *The Guardian* Women's Pages over the period of Mary Stott's editorship (1957- 72) when the Women's Page became enshrined as the voice piece of liberal feminism.

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<sup>133</sup> Stott notes that readers dislike its title and asks "*Is it the only section women will read? Also, men will be put off reading it or distinguished contributors with something to say will be put off as they assume only half the readers will read it.*" She then invites readers' comments. (Stott, *ibid.*)



### 3 Methodology

#### Feminist qualitative and interpretative approaches

It is not only the voices of the consuming masses that are missing from [...] studies of fashion. People themselves, in all their confused volition are absent as well, and their absence from text-based analyses has two very political implications, pessimistic and elitist. First human actors are denied any effective power to make their own history. Individuals, caught in a web of signification that determines meaning, without a residue of free will, lack the quality of rational self-consciousness necessary for authentic political activity. That is why they 'waste' their time at amusement arcades or beauty salons. Second in a world where the masses respond to dancing shadows, efficacious politics can only come from those with an ability to deconstruct and therefore to neutralise the effects of culture. Thus the conservative effect of consumerism and false consciousness can be mitigated only by the cognoscenti (Zdatny, 1997, p. 385).

Reviewing the literature on fashioning femininity I became aware of the lack of empirical accounts of women's experiences and histories of fashioning. Identifying this lack as important to address, I examined relevant mainstream and feminist methodological models in preparation for work in this field.

Intrinsic to the development of a feminist approach to research in cultural studies and sociology, media and latterly film studies has been an interrogation of normative data gathering methods. The scarcity of empirical research on female audiences and consumers can be interpreted as to some extent symptomatic of the problem for feminists of the traditional methodological positioning of the researcher and the researched.<sup>1</sup> This vexed question, centred on notions of power, reflects broader feminist concerns with individual women's agency. Feminist ethnographers have been concerned not to replicate or add to the inequalities between the researcher and the researched, where such a dichotomy has traditionally defined the binary oppositions civilised/native, adult/child, teacher/pupil, powerful/powerless and the historical relationship in anthropological colonialism between the explorer/other.<sup>2</sup> The feminist quest to uncover the hidden histories and silenced voices of women, and to gather new understandings of personal, social and political lives from a woman's perspective (as generated in Consciousness Raising groups) was to translate into a dissatisfaction with

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<sup>1</sup> The psychoanalytic approach, a paradigm for feminist film studies has tended to cast the researcher in the role of the analyst whilst ethnographic research "*has ignored the unconscious*" (Feueur cited in Stacey, 1994, p. 76).

<sup>2</sup> This dichotomy has been debated in much feminist sociology, (for example, Roberts, 1981; Oakley, 1981; Birch, 1998; Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; Alldred, 1998; Crawford et al, 1992) and in work across a range of disciplines.



the shortcomings of the positivist tradition and the limitations of quantitative research for this purpose. Consequently, 'interpretative research design' became a so-called natural choice for feminist scholars (van Zoonen, 1994, p134).<sup>3</sup>

Further feminist dilemmas and insights have arisen through the relatively recent participation of working-class women as academic researchers, articulated by Stanley as the 'sinful' condition of being 'a native' (Stanley, 1995, pp. 183-194). As I approached my own work in the field I felt I experienced and *embodied* the tensions discussed by Skeggs (1997), Stanley (1995), Plummer (2000), Walkerdine (1997) and Edwards and Ribbens (1998) amongst others, straddling academic and non-academic, public and private worlds. Feminist critiques of research methods, however painfully wrought, have been unequivocally productive, but these new perspectives remain at odds with even some of the more recent benchmark texts for qualitative researchers. Silverman suggested that participant observation is virtually invalidated if "*The observer [...] 'goes native', identifying so much with participants that, like a child learning to talk (s)he cannot remember how (s)he found out [how to] articulate the principles underlying what s(he) is doing*" (Silverman, 1993, p. 157).<sup>4</sup> In sharp contrast to these recommendations, not only have feminist researchers acknowledged their relatedness or otherwise to the research context but degrees of equivalence have been sought.<sup>5</sup>

A further way that recent (feminist) qualitative research has differed from more traditional data gathering and analysis in the field is in the perception of neutrality. Historically neutrality has been a universal aim in research endeavours but more recently, researchers have come to broadly acknowledge the subjectivity of all accounts, and the futility of claims to neutrality in qualitative research such that, "*Neutrality is probably not a legitimate goal in qualitative research. Even if a*

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<sup>3</sup> The interpretative model offered feminist researchers a more equitable model between researcher and researched than positivist approaches as well as generating complexity rather than static data and analyses. Interpretative research is often equated with doing qualitative research, however, van Zoonen has differentiated them thus, "*I [...] think of 'interpretative' as referring to a particular inductive research strategy and design, whereas 'qualitative' concerns a particular, qualitative way of gathering and analysing data. This distinction is necessary to credit the differences of purpose between the 'qualitative' research carried out by market researchers and the 'qualitative' research conducted by feminist and other critical scholars*" (van Zoonen, 1994, p.135). Nevertheless, adopting these approaches has entailed a recognition to an extent, that "*qualitative research is itself a marginalised methodological discourse*" (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998, p. 3). Edwards and Ribbens have pointed out that, in the context of the currency of quantitative and positivist methodologies and traditions (feminist) qualitative research appears relatively and inevitably unconvincing because concepts of validity, reliability and representativeness "*are posed within a numerical rather than a process framework*" (ibid. p. 4).

<sup>4</sup> The use here of a perennial association of 'native'/woman/children with badness and incoherent subjectivity runs counter to the aims of this research and of earlier feminist approaches where identification is an important component in the research processes. Silverman's position reiterates the division between the researcher/ researched in that it allows no possibility of the researcher *being native* to the field, by way of their own social, cultural or historical experiences.

<sup>5</sup> This in turn generates further dilemmas as I experienced preparing for work with participants, as both researcher and researched (and one may be both) may disagree on the appropriate levels of 'openness'.



*neutral were possible, it is not desirable, because it does not equip the researcher with enough empathy to elicit personal stories or in-depth description*" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 13).<sup>6</sup>

Despite (or perhaps because of) the radical departures in feminist research methods in the Second Wave, tangible studies in film, media, music and cultural studies, using feminist qualitative methodologies are still small in number.<sup>7</sup> Few indicate how identifications, in fashioning and forms of femininity, pleasurable or otherwise, operate between women or girls and women beyond screen/audience interpellations. However, as van Zoonen has suggested, what feminist research has added to interpretative research strategies is significant: *"a notion of power, an acknowledgement of the structural inequalities involved in and coming out of the process of making meaning"* (van Zoonen, *ibid.*).

### **Adopting feminist qualitative research methods on fashioning femininity**

Frequently, feminist qualitative research has elected to make the vernacular and the mundane and subjects' *"(un)conscious construction of meaning"* (van Zoonen, 1994, p135) the focus for research, to illuminate 'subjugated knowledges'<sup>8</sup> as is the case in this study. In such work the qualitative techniques of in-depth and open-ended or semi-structured interviewing and participant observation have been effective. Since this approach has also enabled feminist researchers to elicit specific information from participants I adopted this methodological approach. I was concerned to elicit some specific information and therefore used a focused format (Meron, Fiske and Kendall, cited in Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 5) and grounded theory was deployed since it is a method *"based on exchanges in which the interviewees can talk back, clarify and explain their points"* (*ibid.* p. 4).

Feminist ethnographic audience research has produced accounts that are difficult to group homogenously as identification but include *"forms of feminine desire"* (Stacey, 1994, p. 135) and qualitative methods have enabled accounts that express these identifications.<sup>9</sup> Using ethnographic

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<sup>6</sup> Walkerdine suggests that *"it is an impossible task to avoid the place of the subjective in research, and that instead of making futile attempts to avoid something that cannot be avoided, we should think more carefully about how to utilise our subjectivity as a feature of the research process"* (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 59).

<sup>7</sup> For example, van Zoonen notes that *"Work in both film and cultural studies has until recently failed to offer up methodological models that could account for (the homoerotic) pleasures between female (or male) spectators and female (or male) stars, or fascinations between women on the screen."* (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 88).

<sup>8</sup> Edwards and Ribbens note that this Foucaultian concept has been useful in feminist efforts to elaborate more fully, *"knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task"* (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998, p. 12). They read the *"routinised aspects of women's lives... the dailiness as an everyday knowledge that provides the epistemological base for women's lives"* (*ibid.*).

<sup>9</sup> Rubin and Rubin (1995) have stated, *"With cultural interviews researchers ask about shared understandings, taken for granted rules of behaviour and standards of value, and mutual expectations. Cultural interviewers are looking for what people have learnt through experience and passed on to the next generation."* (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 6). Their definition describes in general terms the approaches used by Furman (1997), Langhamer (2000), Black (2002) and Black and Sharma (2001) to examine women's relationships to fashioning and beauty. Some continue to acknowledge that their research in such fields can be



methods Stacey in her ground-breaking text *Stargazing: female spectators of Hollywood cinema*, gathered audience responses which revealed complex new knowledges about how female pleasures in media are (re)constructed according to an individual subjects' (transient) class positions, ethnicity, and historical and cultural shifts in attitudes towards notions of femininity and sexuality. Her respondents were evoking *memories* of pleasure.<sup>10</sup> These precedents inspired my own initiatives.

In order to prepare appropriately for discussions with women in the field, and to allow for the possibility of women discussing pleasures and forms of feminine desire, I examined an array of feminist methodological approaches and committed myself to 'reflexivity' that is,

reflecting upon and understanding our own personal political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents. Reflexivity also means acknowledging the critical role we play in creating interpreting and theorising research data (Mauthener and Doucet, 1998, p. 121).

### **Autobiography and memory work**

Interrogating my autobiography required an appropriate methodology and in the findings and approaches of memory work collectives I found a feminist approach that both challenged the researcher/researched paradigm and validated the role of memories in the social constructions of femininity.<sup>11</sup> Crawford reported that in work undertaken by the SPUJJ collective "*We were our own subjects; the distinctions between researcher and 'subject' disappeared*" (Crawford et al, 1992, p. 43). Crawford's description of Haug's praxis/practice suggests the potential of the methodology: "*Her ideas transcend traditional boundaries and distinctions... between psychology and sociology, Marxism and feminism, teaching and research, theory and practice, subject and object*" (ibid. p. 3). Indeed, Haug's contention that experience articulated via memory should be acknowledged as the basis of theory and research was a vital and radical departure for feminist interdisciplinary research. Exponents developed the methodology of 'memory work' to enable the empirical but not empiricist investigation of the social construction of selves. They interpreted identity as being continually constructed from an

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construed as a betrayal of feminism. Black states "*before I began research into beauty therapy, I had never entered a beauty salon. I had no idea of the extent of salon usage, I held an image of beauty salons as highly feminised spaces, where pink décor and floral patterns would dominate. I felt that I would somehow betray my sense of feminist politics to succumb to the treatments offered inside*" (Black, 2001, p. 3).

<sup>10</sup> Nostalgia itself was recognised as, "*clearly one of the pleasures of remembering 1940s and 1950s Hollywood cinema*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 66). This revealed much about the mechanisms of memory itself and contributed knowledge about the psychological and material investment of audiences in images of the female star: "*Women's memories of the cinema in this period offer the opportunity for the presentation of past and present subjectivities through processes of self-narrativisation*" (ibid. p. 68). Self-narrativisation was also used by Hobson in her research on female soap viewers (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 118) and is clearly one of the 'compensatory strategies' employed by Radway's romance readers (see, for example, Radway, 1984, p. 113).

<sup>11</sup> Memory work was originated by Frigga Haug et al (1987).



individual's relationship to shifting social and cultural contexts: "*Our basic premise was that anything and everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace - precisely because it is remembered - for the formation of identity*" (Haug et al, 1987, p. 50). The process revealed how individual accounts of, for example, the fabrication of an un/acceptable appearance, can be seen to be social, that is, dependent on common recognitions of un/acceptable appearances in specific social and cultural contexts, and on such factors as gender and age.<sup>12</sup> In Haug's germinal work, *Female Sexualisation, a collective work of memory*, memories or stories written by participants triggered by banal words<sup>13</sup> were analysed as texts indicative of an individual's relationship to shifting social and cultural contexts, "*as written signs of the relations within which identity is formed*" (ibid.).<sup>14</sup> In *Family Secrets*, Annette Kuhn amalgamated the methods of Spence and Martin, memory work and psychoanalytic criticism in order to generate personal narratives from family photographs and film extracts (Kuhn, 1995).<sup>15</sup> In such texts, notions of gender difference rested on the specificities of clothing and the forms of relationship inherent in all forms of adornment. For Kuhn, "*Dressing up – like its cognate activities making up and doing one's hair – suggest[ed] a relation of fabrication, construction and production*" (ibid. p. 51).<sup>16</sup>

In addition to providing an initial pathway for the research, the methodology highlighted the dyad of individuated and collective processes or "*centrality of intersubjectivity*" (Crawford et al, 1992, p. 54) as participants frequently demonstrated their capacity to articulate pleasurable identifications that drew on an unexpected amalgam of remembered traces to imaginatively re-construct images of feminine selves.<sup>17</sup>

In adopting memory work methods in the initial stages of the research my aim was to prepare myself for work with other participants, for example undergoing the process of generating shameful,

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<sup>12</sup> A further important insight for this thesis was Haug's understanding that "*learning a way of looking can be pleasurable*" (Haug et al, 1987, p. 169).

<sup>13</sup> For example *legs*, or *hair*.

<sup>14</sup> Recent feminist auto/biographical work on British visual culture offers further models for interrogating social constructions of self, allied to or utilising directly the memory work model (Steedman, 1989; J. Spence and P. Holland, 1991; V. Walkerdine, 1990; Kuhn, 1995 Crawford et al, 1992). The work of Jo Spence (1986, 1991) expanded feminist knowledge into new territories in her work using photography to interrogate the complex interstices of class, sexuality, memory, body, gender, through the photographic (self) portrait, notably snapshots and family photographs in the historicized constructions of self (Spence and Holland, 1991; Spence, 1986). In her development, with Rosy Martin, of Phototherapy, the traditional paradigm of muse or model/ artist or photographer was rejected as freighted with an equivalent, if not wider, power imbalance as that of researcher/researched paradigm.

<sup>15</sup> Kuhn's work was a further important model since, unlike Haug et al and the SPUJJ collective, Kuhn demonstrated that this approach could be undertaken individually rather than collectively.

<sup>16</sup> Utilising and expanding upon the memory work methods developed by Haug et al, the SPUJJ collective provided traces of their personal (and collective) self-construction. Their emphatic conclusion is that emotions, rather than being 'naturally occurring', linked as they were in common-sense understandings to physiological and/or psychological truths, can be unpicked from conceptual confusion and interpreted as both acculturated and gendered. Further, their deployment of memory work methods to understand the 'gendering of emotion' provides a model of psychology within a collective rather than individualistic frame (Crawford et al, 1992, p. 195).

<sup>17</sup> "*Selves are the creation of the collectivities in which they live and act. Selves are able through their reflective powers of self-intervention to re-create themselves. Identities are not formed or maintained through imitation or through any simple reproduction of pre-determined patterns. The human capacity for action forces persons to attempt to live their own meanings and find some means of self-fulfilment albeit within a pre-determined and circumscribed social space*" (ibid.).





5. 'A' failed as a bridesmaid due to 'inadequate, small hair'.



painful or banal episodes.<sup>18</sup> On reflection, the memory work process and corpus of texts facilitated reflexivity; proved useful in generating 'triggers' for discussion with participants; provided an appropriate research tool for interpreting social and historical accounts; minimised the dichotomy of the researcher/researched; and highlighted the subjectivity of my own accounts of self-fashioning.<sup>19</sup> Although they constituted the precursor to the empirical research, extracts of memory work are incorporated at intervals in this thesis since they have a collective resonance, and I hope demonstrate my own willingness to be 'open'. A will to adorn in tension with desires to identify with often-distinct communities was reflected across the body of memory work texts. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the memory work findings of Haug et al, Crawford et al, Kuhn, Spence and others, many of the texts I generated constructed the notion of a female body, my own, subordinated by, or embattled in social and cultural contexts, what might be interpreted as classed and patriarchally determined spaces and places: at school ('A''s humiliating, confrontation with a headmaster over inappropriate, or dissident, in this case dyed, hair remembered as 'unjust') family occasions (for example, 'A' failed as a bridesmaid due to 'inadequate, small hair') and so on.

Perhaps less predictably, other texts that also recorded what I remembered as failures to perform appropriate fashionings of femininity, were stories of subordination and disdain experienced within the context of feminist or women-centred spaces (women's groups, conferences, reading groups, alienation on first consuming *Spare Rib*, and on first witnessing Birkenstocks etc.) on the basis of 'A''s excessive and disdained make-up, hair fashionings, and jewellery. Significantly, memories/stories of failure and contingent success to enact appropriate forms of normative, patriarchally endorsed femininity were matched in number by 'A''s failures in affecting an appropriate *feminist* fashioning, experienced through specific encounters and the routinised policing of desired but repressed forms of fashioning. These critiques were read as judgements of 'A''s (lack of) morality, respectability, sexuality and feminist consciousness, the tensions between perceptions of feminist versus class betrayals.

These memory work texts were indubitably episodes where class was significantly foregrounded. This intensified my desire to work in fields where I could discuss fashioning with working-class women and consolidated a feminist sociological imperative to illuminate subjugated knowledges. Women's fashioning, cosmetic acts and the places associated with them remain the

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<sup>18</sup> I used triggers including Hair, Beauty, Black fashioning, Glamour, Taste and Royalty.

<sup>19</sup> I used the pseudonym 'A' and, using Haug et al's model wrote texts in the third person facilitating the aim that "*The gaze we cast today on ourselves of yesterday becomes the gaze cast by one stranger on another*" (Haug, 1987, p. 46).



antithetical to serious scholarship and are considered irrelevant to high culture. Conversely, they remain of significant importance to communities of women including female audiences of pop culture, fashion and star systems. Feminist theorists have suggested that the activities of women (and men) that centre on the construction of identities are of critical importance to theory, however few feminist research projects have focussed empirically on the fashion and beauty industries or women's personal fashioning regimes.<sup>20</sup>

### Combining methodologies

*Stargazing* provided a model of research that fused distinct methodological approaches and drew upon models of psychoanalytic and cultural studies feminist scholarship. Subsequently, empirical research on stars and fashioning, for example, Rachel Moseley's *Growing up with Audrey Hepburn* (2002) have demonstrated how useful inter-methodological approaches are to interrogating identifications and constructions of (fashioned) identities and subjectivities and the resonance between star/fan. Moseley goes further in stating that attempts to study only text, or solely audience or consumer is problematic; a key finding in her ethnographic research was "*the uselessness of attempting to separate the idea of a 'text' from one of 'audience'.*" (Moseley, 2002 p. 216) Consequently, Moseley's process of mapping the consumption pleasures in and uses of the text 'Audrey Hepburn' by women growing up in the 1950s, 1960s and 1990s was "*a kind of cultural studies of film, film history as personal history and through that social history; a history that is interested in ephemera.*" (ibid. p. 220)

In order to examine women's tastes, consumption, dis/pleasures in texts and the relationship of their construction of (changing) dispositions and fashionings within a matrix of broader cultural, historical, social and political contexts I drew upon methodological tools and approaches that could enable research beyond a linear, arguably myopic perspective. Consequently, my aim, following the generation of a personal memory-work corpus and an initial sketching of the proposed research territory was to freely combine media analysis with ethnographic interviews, acknowledging the inseparability of text from audience/consumer accounts.

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<sup>20</sup> Exceptions include Chapkis, 1988; Craik, 1989; Delinger and Williams, 1997; Furman 1997; Black and Sharma, 2001





6. Atlantic City, 1968, first mass demonstration by Women's Liberation movement, 'No more Miss America', in *Sisterhood is powerful*, 1970, Robin Morgan, unpaginated.



## Documents

Although the Literature Review provides an account of my survey of relevant texts I want to briefly account for my selection and exclusion of specific documents. At an early stage I chose to examine feminist texts on fashioning and embarked on a fascinating trawl through the history of *The Guardian's* Women's Page.<sup>21</sup> Although Women's Page commentaries are used to contextualise specific passages I chose not to foreground my findings in this thesis.<sup>22</sup> However, this survey greatly informed my knowledge of the construction of forms of feminist taste and fashioning and provided a useful tool for reflexivity since I had been a Women's Page reader over a significant period. I also chose not to examine publications generated by the beauty industries *per se* after noting that few texts were assiduously used by participants. In this sense this project is consciously dislocated from feminist critiques that accord a monolithic role to advertising and beauty industries in discussions of femininity. In contrast, I use many hagiographic, ghosted and academically 'untouchable' texts, mainly popular, auto/biographies of stars. I make no claims for their veracity but recognise their popularity and possible importance in constructing ideas and models of star systems, identifications and 'stories about self'.<sup>23</sup> Further sources that are not routinely archived in academic collections are used throughout this thesis including girls' annuals, feminist pamphlets and song sheets, fan memorabilia and fanzines culled from, for example, the national Lesbian Archive and Glasgow Women's Library.<sup>24</sup>

Specific documents and 'iconic images' had a galvanising effect at early stages in the research process. For example, revisiting the second-wave feminist anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful* (Morgan, 1970). I was intrigued by a photo of the first mass demonstration by Women's Liberation in Atlantic City New Jersey in 1968.<sup>25</sup> In the foreground is a white woman with large elaborately coiffed bleached and excessively feminised pompadour-type hairstyle, panda eyes and conspicuous jewellery. She is chanting and stridently giving a two fingered victory sign. The bouffanted woman plays an ambivalent role here visible as a demonstrator against and witness to the Trashing of Miss America, the germinal

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<sup>21</sup> I am grateful to Simon Frith for this suggestion. Since, as Toynbee recently 'confessed' "*We [feminists] were not the masses: we were The Guardian Women's Page, Spare Rib magazine and a clutch of small alternative prints, though mass marketed magazines took up the chic issues*" (Toynbee, 2002, p. 8). An examination of both the Women's Page and *Spare Rib* seemed a critical exercise in tracking the development of notions of feminist fashioning.

<sup>22</sup> I hope that this may provide the basis of a future research project. Early *Spare Ribs* are critiqued more rigorously at intervals in this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> Ghosted and/or hagiographic autobiographies and biographies constitute a (pleasurable) and popular genre for fan consumption. Ken Plummer's illustrates the historicity of specific groups of accounts, for example 'coming out' stories, (Plummer, 1995) and some star narratives, particularly 'rags to riches' accounts may constitute a further socially and culturally constructed form.

<sup>24</sup> An unexpected body of material was found in illustrations, artworks and answers to questionnaires generated by readers and recorded in girls' annuals. Some are used as illustrations in this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> An episode captured in Laura Cottingham's excellent documentary of US feminist art and activism of the 1970s, *Not for Sale* (1999)



Women's Liberation protest, but I speculated on her arguably troubling presence to (revisionist) feminists who might have sought to suggest that liberation was fought for by women who styled themselves 'naturally'.

### Locating fields, gatekeepers and participants

Although I acknowledge in this thesis that self-fashioning is ubiquitous and that any and all knowledge that expands the empirical knowledge on women's fashioning dis/pleasures might be a useful contribution to feminist research, I was particularly interested to gain insights from women who used disdained cosmetic acts and fashioning services, for example hairdressing salons.<sup>26</sup> Some 'dissimilarity sampling' occurred since some participants had relinquished working-class for middle-class tastes or identified themselves as from middle-class backgrounds. Based on my 'iconic memories'<sup>27</sup> of music, film and TV stars who fashioned to excess I was keen to talk to women who had their own such memories, women who did not qualify as the fanatical connoisseurs or collectors who might be the focus for studies of fanship. Through 'snowballing' methods I identified women salon-goers, hairdressers, trainee beauty therapists at a College of Further Education and their customers along with women already in my network that agreed to discuss their fashioning regimes, tastes and identifications.

Just as geographic zones of the city are frequented and populated by specific groups and communities, salons in the affluent West/South and poorer East/North differ physically and architecturally, in the fashioning of personnel and in other ways that suggest dispositions of class, taste and gender.<sup>28</sup> I identified salons in the East/North as more likely to be sites for prospective participants. One journey to identifying a research site began with an obscure memory of fleeting, past pleasures in forms of feminine excess. 'La Paris' salon was on the bus route I had often travelled along Marytown road in the North from Glasgow City centre to the Department of Social Security office to 'sign on'. It had be a pleasing landmark for me on an otherwise depressing journey. I had liked the signage, sixties

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<sup>26</sup> I discuss the demonisation of hairdressers in 'Fashioning Hair'.

<sup>27</sup> The concept 'iconic memory', coined by Stacey has been a valuable one for this thesis. Iconic memory, one of two new conceptualisations of the activity of the female audience viewing and remembering female stars defines a process whereby individual woman imagined a star/herself in a 'frozen' or 'treasured' moment. (Stacey provides a further conceptualisation, self-narrativisation). Stacey demonstrates how these conceptualisations enabled female spectators to construct themselves as 'stars' of their own stories, linked with their own screen heroines (Stacey, 1994, p. 132).

<sup>28</sup> Many salons in the gentrified bohemian West End state that they are 'unisex' or otherwise blur the gender of their target customer, for example in the names of salons themselves. The more expensive (West End and South Side) salons have frequently modernised/masculinised their physical environment, shop front and appellation; for example, Alan Edwards, Scrimshaws, Biyoshi, Broomfields, Cabello, Capellini, Christopher Bond Hair Design, Coia Hairdressing, Crush hairdressing, Cutting Club, DLC etc. Salons located in less affluent areas are more routinely women only (although this is never made explicit in signage or advertising) indicated by feminised appellations, for example: The Beauty Box, Eleanor's, Goldilocks, Hair by Angie, Hair by Norma, Jackie's, Mamie's Salon, My Fair Lady, etc.



cursive letters on a high relief background of a tricolour and noted a paradoxical familiar incongruity, a 'French' salon in the middle of an unreconstructed Glaswegian council housing estate, the commercialisation of a promise of glamour in unglamorous surroundings. I interpreted it now as reflecting mythologised working-class women's tastes for salons, parodied in mainstream and queer performances, but acknowledged it as a landmark for me on at least two registers: nostalgia for myself as a working-class girl typically arrested by such glamorous incongruity oscillating and in tension with my Art School gaze, consuming 'La Paris' from the perspective of a lecturer on 'Gender, Art and Culture' and 'Kitsch, Vernacular and Outsider Arts'. Approaching 'La Paris' now as a researcher intensified my perception of the distance between Art School tastes and values and those of salon-goers and workers but, significantly, its remoteness too from forms and tastes of feminist academicism.

I felt that the legacy of feminist disdain for cosmetic acts and feminine excess might present as much of a potential barrier to my research with staff and customers in salons as any knowledge prospective participants might have of patriarchal or 'arty' contempt for their field. Although I was committed to elucidating my approach to both gatekeepers and prospective participants in all fields, I chose not to foreground my feminism in most initial meetings other than with women whom I knew identified themselves as such.<sup>29</sup>

My concerns to bridge the boundary between myself and other research participants was to the best of my ability carefully negotiated. I attempted to follow Rubin and Rubin in assuming that "*the interviewer is not justified in keeping all uncomfortable things to herself whilst asking others to reveal what is personal and private. Feminist researchers argue that being open about themselves to their research collaborators, [ensures] interviewers [are] both fair and practical*" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 37). I felt prepared to reveal something of myself when soliciting information from interviewees, but less comfortable in preparing a checklist of boundaries of what exactly I would/not or should/ not reveal.<sup>30</sup> Although I adopted an approach of 'openness' I appreciate that this was on my own terms having found no specific guidelines for openness other than a notion of equivalence in qualitative

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<sup>29</sup> To counter any concerns that my intension was to critique or disdain I attempted to demonstrate that I sought otherwise in my introductory letters and phone contact. (See Appendix ii – letter to manager of 'La Paris')

<sup>30</sup> For example, I was unprepared for the hesitancy and/or shyness of Ellen the first research participant I spoke to. Rubin and Rubin's is indubitably a feminist approach, but it is also generally the way I behave in embarking on new friendships with new people. Reflecting on the research process I feel that although I 'got on' with all the participants, this was just as well since I had no contingency other than common sense for it being otherwise.



methods texts. This is a problematic area as researchers and researched may disagree on appropriate levels of openness in, for example, the context of a salon.<sup>31</sup>

Negotiation with gatekeepers in this research project was one of the most significant factors in enabling and directing the research process. The support of some, notably Mrs. Martin, manager of the salon 'La Paris' ensured that I had an illuminating, at times thrilling experience. The decisions or lack of responses of others curtailed, informed and altered the course of the research.<sup>32</sup>

I learnt that salon managers could be model gatekeepers and research facilitators exercising judicious and effective interpersonal skills. For example, having arrived at 'La Paris' an unknown, English, eager but potentially in the way, 'person from University', I felt the staff had agreed on a mildly humouring stance (for which I was grateful!). Having begun the interviews rather precipitously with Ellen whilst she had her head in a sink, manager Mrs. Martin deftly directed me to Mrs Lohead who had just arrived, ahead of the several other customers already settled in the salon. Only after reflection on my field notes did I appreciate that she had directed me to the single, self-consciously 'cultured' and politically conservative person in the salon, the only middle-class customer and the most loquacious.<sup>33</sup> Paired with someone thought to be more 'on my wavelength' the hairdressers could get on with their work and, indeed, I could 'warm up' with a voluble, articulate and confident participant, raising my confidence about approaching other customers.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Would 'Ellen' have been more forthcoming if I had positioned myself in terms of my sexuality or my feminist views or other potentially controversial subjects? Or been open about my anxieties about whether she read me as an academic with a patronising aim or approach? Or confessed that this was my first ever interview!

<sup>32</sup> Originally, I had hoped to research the expansive and highly fashioned culture of amateur disco dancing. Gatekeepers signalled that this was an already over researched territory and otherwise deflected my enquiries. Although I discuss jewels and jewellery in this thesis approaches to discussing and even photographing independent East End jewellers was fraught with difficulties. I was concerned not to be read as either judging or threatening.

My anxieties about salon gatekeepers had been assuaged by Mrs Martin's confident and mischievous response. After contacting the salon by phone (and speaking to a junior worker) and then by letter I called again and a memo records that Mrs Martin joked, "*We didn't think it [the research] sounded too sinister*" and then hummed the *Twilight Zone* theme tune.

<sup>33</sup> Mrs Lohead was the sole participant who made any critical suggestions about who I should interview and how, although it occurred to me that this was a 'front': "*A front* [first coined by Goffman in 1959] *is an image given off to communicate an acceptable impression to an audience outside the cultural arena*" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 24). And was the only customer not to be referred to by her first name by staff and salon-goers. Manager Mrs. Martin was also always never referred to by her first name even by her co-workers.

<sup>34</sup> The transfer was managed as follows:

AP: [concluding discussion with Ellen] Okay, I'll just leave it for now, then I'll think about other things I want, because I feel I've just-

Mrs. Martin: [to customer entering the salon] Mrs Lohead, Adele's asking some customers a few questions about different things, do you mind terribly if she asks you a few questions? She's doing an essay on hair.

Mrs. Lohead: I just hope that I'm able to answer them, I hope it's nothing intellectual.

[General salon laughter]

AP: I hope not, I don't think I'm capable of that

Mrs. Martin: [encouraging me to move to another part of the salon] Is it all right if Mrs. Lohead has a wee seat down?

AP: Yeah, just relax, and I'll come and talk to you, thank you very much.

Mrs. Lohead: Shall we sit over here?

AP: That would be lovely, that's really helpful. So is this your regular hairdressers?



## The look and sound of the researcher

Although many feminist and other researchers have been concerned to analyse the relationship between the researcher and the researched in terms of power few theorise the ways in which the appearance (self-fashioning) of the researchers themselves might problematise or encourage the levels of openness on both 'sides'. In some of the texts included in the Literature Review the appearance of women as audiences, stars and participants in memory work is critical, however the appearance of the researcher is rarely alluded to or documented.<sup>35</sup> In work with research participants I considered my own appearance to be significant, particularly given the research topic, and potentially perceived differently by different interviewees. Texts on qualitative research methods argue that the appearance of researched and researcher is significant but fail to offer advice. I approached the interviews from the standpoint that class, ethnicity, age and self-fashioning determine the ways that participants read themselves and others. After considering the difficulties both practical and ethical of dressing for the interview based on any anticipation of the tastes of women I might encounter in the field I decided that at the very least a level of openness might begin with me dressing as I would for work in academia, and that this fashioning would arguably signal a seriousness of intent.<sup>36</sup> I was anxious enough about what my self-fashioning would say to participants that my first contact with unknown gatekeepers was always by phone or letter.

Although the voice is an important epistemological concept for feminist theory, in qualitative methods it is almost exclusively the voice of the researched that is under scrutiny, for example its vulnerability in the course of data collection (for example, Ribbens, 1998; Mauthener, 1998; Parr, 1998). The researcher's voice is somewhat idealistically presented as without class, ethnicity or gender. My preparation for interviewing involved reflecting on the possible meanings of my own voice/accent

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<sup>35</sup> Haug et al reported that they found it 'easy' to differentiate themselves from women who dressed to (feminine) excess: "*In our group the question of the ways in which women constitute themselves as slave girls was discussed initially in a seminar in Hamburg. At this stage we were still contemplating the process of subjection simply in terms of women's display of their bodies, in other words, in terms of what seemed to us to constitute unambiguous sexual invitations – the wearing of short skirts, or see-through blouses for example, it seemed relatively easy to place ourselves at a distance from such things; we ourselves dress differently in any case – in jeans and jumpers for the most part*" (Haug et al, 1987, p. 79).

Rubin and Rubin suggest rather vaguely, "*In interviews one mark of respect is to dress appropriately... In our research done in offices and people's homes that often means dressing somewhat formally for the interview (generally a jacket and a tie for men and dress or skirt with blouse and mylons for women.*" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 102).

To my surprise immediately prior to my first interviews I had been advised on a university methods course to use relevant dressing up clothes to 'pass' in specific fields, for example white coats could be used when interviewing participants in medical contexts.

<sup>36</sup> I have not included speculation here on the possible effect my appearance had in the field but, for the record I always wore a combination of expensive and cheap jewellery, I never wore make-up although I deliberated for some time about this, my hair was continually dyed blonde and gripped inexpertly into a French pleat. I always wore trousers, raincoat and flattish shoes. I am a white, able-bodied women. Although I have experienced episodes of fashioning dissidence I had also during the research period been read, in the context of my own council block lift as a 'social worker'.

This process of reflection intensified my awareness that my *normative* fashioning for work was a conscious process of 'passing', a fashioning that sublimated my will to adorn.



uncovering a further locus of tension.<sup>37</sup> I began to consider the question, how does the social and cultural voice of the researcher operate in the context of the interview? Unable and unwilling to adopt another dialect, I decided that listening, demonstrating a shared knowledge of habitus, cultural capital and related dispositions and avoiding the more rhetorical or academic terms of feminism in the field was imperative to dispel perceptions generated by my own voice.

### Data gathering, recording and coding

In work with research participants I used a semi structured interview format, that is, I introduced the topic and then guided the discussion by asking specific questions (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 5). I used an open-ended interviewing technique that yielded knowledges beyond specific topics, allowing information to flow from an opening theme, for example hair, into insights about body and class, feminism and other aspects of fashioning. My approach to the data gathering journey was that it was iterative, that is, repeating the exercise of data gathering in meetings and interviews: *“analysing it, winnowing it and testing it [to] come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon”* (ibid. p. 46). This approach begins with broad questions, for example in this study “Tell me about your history of hairstyles” or “When did you first hear or see Dusty Springfield?”. Later interviews became more focussed (in theory!) as themes came together and began to form theories (ibid. p. 46).<sup>38</sup> I was anxious that I was never fully prepared to ask technical questions about hairdressing and other cosmetic acts, however I felt that keeping questions open ended and using main questions merely as a prompt would allow me to ask participants advice on the terms they used. My aim was to gather ‘cultural interviews’ –where researchers *“ask about shared understanding, taken for granted rules or behaviour and standards of value and mutual expectations.”* (ibid. p6).

Although I began with the idea of interviewing individuals I frequently had to adapt my approaches in the field due to the physical space of salons, institutions and even family homes where a one-to-one discussion might become more like a focus group, or hairdresser/customer or

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<sup>37</sup> I am English with a predominantly Yorkshire accent although I have lived in Glasgow for over twenty years. Outside the context of research I have perceived my voice as inappropriately classed as not middle class enough in a Scottish academic institutional context and too middle class in some non academic contexts, for example with English relatives who have also read my voice increasingly as humorously cod-Glaswegian. In my hometown of Glasgow I am routinely read as a tourist.

<sup>38</sup> As prompts for myself I used index cards with the ‘main questions’ hand written on them, for example, *“How long have you been coming here?”* [to salon customers] *“Tell me about your first hairstyle”*, *“Have you ever styled your hair like a film star or modelled it on anyone else?”* In interviews with women who I knew to be interested in Dusty or music more generally I prepared open-ended questions including: *“Can you remember the first time that you saw Dusty or heard her voice?”*, *“Do you remember discussing or listening to Dusty with any other family members or friends?”*, *“Did/do you have a record collection?”*



mother/daughter dialogue. Although I estimated the length of time to be spent with a participant or group, sessions interviews were generally significantly longer.<sup>39</sup>

As a rule participants were not routinely asked to take time out from their activities to be interviewed although some one-to-one sessions were arranged. The nature of some contexts where women were sitting, standing or having their hair or other cosmetic acts undertaken allowed for conversation without disrupting the normal course of the visit.<sup>40</sup>

All interviews were tape recorded after gaining the participants' permission and they could stop and restart the recording at any time.<sup>41</sup> I introduced myself and the purpose of the interview on each occasion and gave full information about their shared ownership of the data generated and its possible uses. Participants could ask at any time during or after the recording for any and all material not to be used and I asked women to choose their own pseudonym.<sup>42</sup> Recognising the possible significance of context for the construction of femininity or the experience of pleasure I made photographs outside and inside some salons, with participants' permission.<sup>43</sup> I created field notes and memos throughout the research process. I attempted to approach the interview process from the standpoint of being a participant myself (a commitment rooted in the memory work process) but, like Birch, found this self-identification contingent since I acknowledge the difference of work undertaken 'there', in the field, and 'here', in the individuated work of data analysis, theorising and writing up (Birch, 1998, pp. 172-173).<sup>44</sup>

With an awareness of the multiple concerns that feminist academics have raised concerning the particular vulnerability of the voices of participants in the data analysis stage (see for example, Birch, 1998; Parr, 1998) I embarked on the coding using domain analysis, a process first developed by Spradley (1979) whereby ideas and concepts are grouped, then related terms or processes are clustered to form a coding category within which ideas and terms became subcategories. I manually coded the data (after transcribing the tapes) maintaining a proximity to participants voices that, some have argued use of Nudist or other software disrupts (Birch, 1998). I worked with the data until I felt I had reached

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<sup>39</sup> This was sometimes due to unanticipated levels of interest or delight (by myself or participants) in the process. Some sessions were baldly curtailed due to a participants' soap programme watching commitments or a participant having to go under a dryer etc.

<sup>40</sup> Participants were willing to discuss their hair and other fashioning routines with me whilst in the process of having their hair dressed, lying awaiting massage or, in the case of workers, working with customers on various cosmetic acts.

<sup>41</sup> I was pleased that this occurred on several occasions demonstrating that participants had genuinely felt empowered to do so.

<sup>42</sup> Some women said that they were happy to have their own names used but I have changed them to ensure confidentiality.

<sup>43</sup> I bought a small easy to use camera for this purpose; I wanted the documentation process to be as unobtrusive and simple for me and for interviewees as possible.

<sup>44</sup> Birch notes that *"although fully integrated into the research field as participant in the later stage of analysis 'of 'being here' [...] [she] realised we are all not participants of the same world at the same time"* (Birch, 1998, p. 177).



theoretical saturation and had an array of clusters to examine. Simultaneously a body of literature, memos and concerns were growing ‘outside’ the corpus of empirical accounts that both resonated with the data from the field and shed light upon the patterns of elisions and gaps in discussion.<sup>45</sup> I consequently constructed a framework that allowed for both empirical data and relevant literature to be analysed and critiqued. The contributions from research participants are the most vital component in the thesis, the motor for theories and ongoing refiguring of ideas and structure.

## Timeframe/s

The participants’ accounts determined the timeframe for the thesis representing as they do views from women aged between late teens and eighty-three. They constitute mainly Glasgow-based women’s memories of fashioning over a period of approximately seventy years. Further historical and conceptual frames, for example, ‘Early Mod Dusty’ and ‘Late Queered Dusty’, the run of *The Guardian’s* Women’s Page, the trajectory of my own lifespan as a consumer and so on, constitute a matrix of overlapping timeframes constructed from memories and texts that map the post-war period.<sup>46</sup> Some historical episodes are more sharply focussed on than others, for example, I argue that the period between the late 1950s and the early 1970s was one where British femininity having reached an apotheosis of what I have termed ‘feminine excess without irony’, with the New Look in the 1950s, moved subsequently into crisis in part due to the critiques of feminine excess by high Modernism coupled with the rise of feminist critiques of femininity from the late 1950s on – *a politicisation of femininity*.<sup>47</sup> In the final chapter, ‘Queening It’, my critiques centre on contemporary cultural phenomena, which I attempt to connect to historical precedents within the overarching post-war framework.

## The structure of the thesis

This thesis represents the culmination of processes of accretion and elimination, editing and selection of a huge of volume of data. As I state earlier, themes and avenues for research (for example,

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<sup>45</sup> For example, I had extreme difficulty in articulating the question “*Have you ever felt criticised because of the way you look?*” Participants routinely shrank from this and I yielded little or no data from this and related questions. Similarly, few participants furnished me with their perceptions of what feminists might look like. I discuss this point later.

<sup>46</sup> I demonstrate in my introduction to ‘Fashioning Dusty’ how this period was productive in constructing new consumers, politics, forms of femininity and identifications and identities as at no earlier time.

<sup>47</sup> Following what the Birmingham Feminist History Group has called the quiescence of feminism in the 1950s, the literature for and about women in Britain had presented: “*no[t] one representation of women; but the struggle for primacy of one set of representations concerned with marriage, home and family is systematically victorious throughout our period. The contradictions, however, were present, and by the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties were less successfully contained*” (Birmingham Feminist History Group, 1979, p. 64).



dance cultures) were abandoned and data generated through media analysis (for example, *The Guardian Women's Page*) were ultimately only tangentially referenced. Although many further and alternative themes might have been analysed and/or constructed <sup>48</sup> the foci and structure of the thesis was developed based on the following rationale. The three key chapters, 'Fashioning Dusty', 'Fashioning Hair' and 'Queening It' represent, in my view, the three best ways to address and discuss the ethnographic and media data gathered in the field and from secondary sources as this relates to the intersection of taste, class, femininity and feminism in post-war cultures. After the discussion of the limitations and obfuscation around definitions of femininity in the Literature Review I provide a route from a clearly defined, personal crystallisation of feminine excess culled from memory work on Dusty; through the identifications of her as a model of excess collectively by participants and in an array of media texts; to a deeper exploration of the nature and individual/collective definitions of fashioning femininity for participants themselves; to an analysis of the meaningfulness of hair (fashioning) - for many the most significant of cosmetic acts; through to a broader cultural analysis of excess, weaving ethnographic and media analysis. This final chapter focussing on the most culturally freighted trope of fashioned excess, jewels as it is discursively presented across the broad terrain of popular culture. Each chapter reprises significant, interrelated ideas concerning fashioning dissidence, disdain for excess, pleasures and intimacies between women in fashioning forms of femininities as well as attention to issues of cross-cultural dis/identifications and issues of class. Further themes are woven throughout the chapters notably, the impact of film, music and media in women's use of and disdain for feminine excess and the notion of routines, in cosmetic acts, in music consumption, jewellery wearing and so forth. These routines are themselves linked to the theme of 'fashioning inertia'.

## Research aims

In my efforts to learn more about neglected or disdained forms of fashioned femininity this thesis had to expand to include facets of fashioning and fashion, consumption and audiences, popular music and contemporary journalism, sororial, cross-class and cross-ethnic identifications. Femininity does not reside in one discrete discipline and as I have found cannot be interrogated easily using one methodological approach.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, I have written an essay on the theme of intergenerational fashioning based on the ethnographical material for the journal *Studies in the Literary Imagination* (forthcoming, January, 2005).



The aims of this research are to validate and take seriously the complex and contradictory practices that women engage with in self-fashioning. Specifically: to acknowledge both the role of women's identifications with non-stars in construction of their fashioned selves, to explore the relationship of specific music, TV and film stars to audiences' self-fashioning practices, to interrogate the notion of feminist fashioning as a less fashioned/feminine/constructed mode of fashioning and to investigate episodes of disdain and dissidence in women's fashioning feminine excess, in particular where this might be interpreted as challenging rather than endorsing normative views on passivity. Finally, I hope that this thesis expresses my own pleasures in the research process.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> I should also say that participants in this study signalled and reported their pleasures in (or indifference to) the research process, an evaluation that researchers still rarely report, for example, participant 'Ettie's' son, 'Padraig' who had acted as gatekeeper sent me this email message the day after our meeting: "*'Ettie' had a grand day, I visited her this evening, she thought you were "lovely" and took great delight in recounting your meeting in detail (as is her wont!) I'm glad it worked out well*". Stacey has made the point well that respondents or participants as in the case of her study *Stargazing* were gratified to have their routinely disparaged pleasures (for example, as film fans) validated. Stacey elicited that, far from being patronised as 'merely' a subject of an academic study, their engagement was read by some as conferring academic validation for their pleasures. Without exception I enjoyed the time spent with the research participants, and had no really uncomfortable moments in the process of 'data gathering' apart from a distressing failure of taping equipment in my recording of interviews at 'Cutz' salon.



## 4 Fashioning Dusty

### 4.1 Introduction

At the outset of this project, I found myself frustrated in my attempts to convey the ‘something that femininity displays’. In the process of researching relevant literature, I found few terms to adequately describe what I felt about aspects of femininity. What I could express with some certainty was that feminine excess was subjectively synthesised in my own iconic memory of Dusty Springfield. My instinct was to resist Dusty as a research model since, by the late 1990s her principal association was with gay male audiences and performers. But, since I also owned these memories I began to pursue their relevance to questions of femininity, feminism and fashioning. I took pleasure in Dusty in at least two distinct ways that I linked to notions of class.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand I had treasured memories of consuming Dusty’s voice, body and gestures as a white, working-class girl, on the other, I could consume, but took less pleasure in Dusty ironically, in a post-modern, queered sense and associated this reading with my ambivalent, inevitable movement into the middle-class in the process of acquiring higher education.<sup>2</sup> Whilst acknowledging which reading gave me most pleasure, and that a full, unadulterated wallowing in a treasured memory could not fully recuperate it, if it ever existed, I was also aware that these two positions represented a binary opposition of sorts whereby the treasured memories versus ironic consumption could be extended into the following opposed dyads: false consciousness / playing with style, emotional excess / playing with texts, the disdained vulgar / playing with kitsch, feminine excess in the realm of women / feminine excess couched in the language of drag.<sup>3</sup>

I had noted Dusty’s status as gay icon growing exponentially and intersecting with the rise of identity politics but where were the accounts of women’s identifications, women’s pleasures, women’s fashioning themselves in life rather than play *à la* Dusty? Only ironic appreciation seemed permissible

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, despite the convention of referencing subjects and sources by surname, I use Dusty, for Dusty Springfield. Although it may be read as a subordination of Dusty Springfield, I am concerned to recognise ‘Dusty’ as a construct. Mary O’Brien constructed ‘Dusty’, although the nickname was given to her by school friends because they thought it was an appropriate name for a tomboy (Evans, 1995, p. 9). Although I do not have space in this chapter to chart O’Brien’s ambivalent relationship to both the name (evocative as is of Country and Western genre) and the character ‘Dusty Springfield’, it is the construction of Dusty and the perception of Dusty by fans that is the principle focus for this research.

<sup>2</sup> This point was brought home to me whilst attending a Dusty-themed benefit night at a West End Glasgow club in May 1999 hosted by Amy Lane. The young clientele wore Dusty masks. A small, number of cultured people crucified Dusty numbers in a self-conscious karaoke. Other ironic treats were make-up makeovers and ‘high-rise’ Dusty hairdressing. I knew I did not love consuming Dusty in this way.

<sup>3</sup> I remembered Dusty in two periods of my own making, Early Mod Dusty and Late Queered Dusty. Participant Claire constructed her own two stages, unconnected to the chronology of Dusty’s oeuvre. My aim here is not to deliver a biography but to interrogate the construction of and collective identification with, in the main, Early Mod Dusty.



and this was overshadowed by a gay male prerogative. Identifications, treasured memories and love of Dusty seemed to have been appropriated or superseded by more knowing connoisseurs, bolstered as many queer aficionados were by academic endorsement for their fan-ship. But if I had taken pleasure in Dusty and other encrusted female stars (and indeed neighbours, friends and family members) as a child in the 1960s and 1970s, had other girls and women? Did this merely signify that I too was a gay man in drag and all the other non-queered, working-class, non-ironic female fans of Dusty or Dusty style were hopelessly unreconstructed and beyond the reach of valid research? And what had my involvement with feminists and feminism offered me in the way of tools to analyse or talk about Dusty, or pleasures in female vocal and fashioned performances more generally? What might these pleasurable memories mean to my own research or to feminist knowledge? In shaping the broader project of work with research participants I felt compelled to ask about memories of Dusty, and other women performers with women prepared to talk to me about fashioning for my broader thesis.<sup>4</sup>

### **‘Early Mod Dusty’ in context**

Dusty’s career and experiences as fan and star that form the loose historical frame for this chapter runs parallel to arguably the most volatile debates on feminism and the politics of femininity, sexuality and black political activism in both Britain and America when, as Stuart Hall has argued, marginality has been a productive space as never before (Hall, 1992, *passim*). Whereas this period is considered significant in engendering feminist politics, crises in femininity and the roots of identity politics, the career of Dusty also frames the period of my entry, as a British white girl into consumption of stars and popular music, girls’ and women’s literature and television. Dusty’s generation, growing up in the 1950s a decade before me, were the first post-imperial generation. Although the importance of issues of ethnicity to historical, social and cultural accounts of self- fashioning glamour has in itself only recently begun to be charted, the normative nature of whiteness and its relationship to forms of femininity has occluded its own undeniable relevance to these debates.<sup>5</sup> In her summarising of the impact of Black culture on white British tastes in this period, Jennifer Craik interprets the impact of Black fashion as a fusion of difference and allure for white British youth that rehearses Modernism’s

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<sup>4</sup> Following Stacey, whose work gave me the courage to approach such apparently prosaic questions, I embarked on this aspect of the research *“not to condemn or to champion individual women, but rather to analyse [...] pleasures in order to understand them and to situate those individual viewing [and listening] practices within a broader context”* (Stacey, 1994, p. 47).

<sup>5</sup> The relationship of notions of the exotic and otherness to constructions of glamour is absolutely indissoluble from mainstream and counter-cultural fashion, however, accounts of cross- ethnic self- fashionings are under-researched.



paradoxical relationship with the other.<sup>6</sup> The historical frame of Dusty's life and career, constructed in biographical, journalistic and musical texts is imbricated with references to Americanness as is the case with many other white British music stars of the period.<sup>7</sup> However, an over-determined association with *Blackness* is also apparent.<sup>8</sup> Despite the pervasive racism in post-war Britain, African-American performers and the authenticity of their sound were positively mythologised by some white audiences as Wilmer has recorded.<sup>9</sup> However, few accounts by Black and minority ethnic women growing up in Britain at this time have been published, and the developing fascination with, and racism against Black and minority ethnic communities by white women has been inadequately researched.<sup>10</sup> Issues of racism surface in a range of registers in the literature on Dusty, intersecting a spectrum of issues of gender and class. Dusty's biographer Lucy O'Brien notes that Black culture and American music first came to Dusty's attention when she, the white, Catholic, middle-class girl Mary O'Brien, first started school.<sup>11</sup> There were virtually no Black performers on American and British television and usually Black artists were not pictured on record sleeves, particularly if they sold to a white market (Grieg, 1989, p. 22).<sup>12</sup>

American femininity and the broader Americanisation of British culture was ambivalently perceived in the immediate post-war period as self-assertion as opposed to self-sacrifice, characterised within a range of discourses as commercial, brash and lacking in moral value (ibid. p238) but 'idolised' by girls like Dusty.<sup>13</sup> The specificity of forms of Americanness and femininity that were to prove

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<sup>6</sup> She notes that as popular music became the focus for youth culture, a concomitant fascination for Black culture became more profound and impacted on white subcultural tastes and fashions (Craik, 1994, p. 40). Kobena Mercer discusses white ambivalence to otherness as paradoxical Negrophobia/Negrophilia: "*Both positions, whether they overvalue or devalue the visible signs of racial difference, inhabit the shared space of colonial fantasy*" (Mercer, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Mary O'Brien was born in 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Dusty's career spans the expansion of popular music performed by Black artists, in particular soul and rock, as it emerged from under the rubric 'race music' in Britain over this period. Wilmer notes that Black entertainers had been a significant part of British music for over a century, but that Black music had been 'tailored for whites'. Listeners had to wait until the 1960s to experience the authentic, live vernacular African American performance, that radicalised the British musical climate (Wilmer, 1995, p. 62). Wilmer met African people for the first time in 1957 as a Girl Guide attending the World Camp and Jamboree in Britain (ibid. p. 12). Urban white women were to experience increasingly routine contact with Black people with the extension of minority ethnic communities concurrent with the gradual percolation of forms of Black music in Britain. Girls' annuals bear witness to the gradual visibility of Black performers in the mainstream, for example, pianist Winifred Atwell enjoyed popular success in Britain in the 1950s becoming the first Black artist to sell 1 million records in UK (she features in the *TV Mirror* annual of 1956, Harry Belafonte was a star portrait in the *Preview* annual of 1961 alongside an article on 'The Real Dorothy Dandridge').

<sup>9</sup> "*The American musicians who played in Britain during the days predating the affluent 1960s and the rise of British Beat were treated reverentially, without exception, something I now realise was connected to the post war feeling of optimism...Many British people have stressed the sheer physical impact of hearing Black music for the first time after years of listening to people who'd learnt it from records. Local musicians did a creditable job but failed to assimilate the tension, power and excitement along with the technicalities*" (Wilmer, 1991, p. 40).

<sup>10</sup> An exception is Gail Lewis's account of growing up in Kilburn's West Indian Community (Lewis in Heron, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Post-war migrants from Jamaica and Trinidad had by this time settled in High Wycomb (O'Brien, 1999, p. 8). Memory work texts contained narratives of cross-ethnic identifications in the 1960s of glamour and other pleasures between, A from aged 4, her mother and their Jamaican neighbours.

<sup>12</sup> In 1962, the year of Jamaican independence and the year ska crossed into British music black audiences could still not get into Ronnie Scott's club.

<sup>13</sup> According to O'Brien, America was "*a country Dusty had idolised since childhood*" she was "*weaned on Hollywood movies*". Stacey suggests that "*...whilst it could be claimed that this Americanisation of femininity through commodity consumption in 1950s Britain contributed to the sexual objectification of women in patriarchal culture, such an analysis ignores the ways in which this process also facilitated the production of particular forms of feminine subjectivity largely unavailable to women in*



important in shaping Dusty's feminine identity in the late 1950s and early 1960s differs from those enjoyed by British filmgoers in earlier decades: "*When she began her solo career it was black American artists like Ray Charles and the emerging Motown sound that fired her imagination*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 90).<sup>14</sup>

As I began writing about Dusty for this project, she died aged 59. If I had ever doubted the depth of feeling some women including myself might have had for her, it was palpably felt now. What I discovered is that the pleasures that women derive intimately and collectively from Dusty's and other women's performances, voice and fashioning of feminine excess do not rely on ever having seen or heard her live. Indeed the clichéd invocations on her death – that the work and image of stars like Dusty 'will live on' – is a failure to acknowledge that Dusty's early fashioning of forms of femininity, voice, cosmetic acts and gestures were nostalgically and pleasurably consumed long before her death.

#### 4.2. Beyond Words: accounts of ineffable emotions and otherworldliness

Jean: I don't know, it made me feel good, it made me - I always remember it being sunny. I don't know, there was just something about - it was maybe in the summertime I was listening to it, the sun shining into the living room, I don't know. There was just this feeling about it, and looking out and just going away in a - you know, away in another world. I just loved her music so much; do you know what I mean?

Working with research participants, I was frequently reminded of the difficulties I had encountered at the early stages of this thesis, namely, defining and expressing specific forms of feminine excess. It was reflected in participants' attempts to define their feelings about stars and loved ones who embodied forms of femininity and performances of popular music. When the research turned

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Britain previously. The production of a feminine self in relation to Americanness signified 'autonomy', 'individuality' and independence" (Stacey, 1994, p. 238).

<sup>14</sup> Motown's Marvelettes were at the crest of a new wave of crossover pop following groundbreaking Black stars like Nat King Cole, Harry Belafonte and Lena Horne (Whitall, 1998, p. 51). Dusty's identity is fused with an emergent social acknowledgement, by a minority of white British youth, of Black culture and white racism. She has been mythologised as the champion of Motown in Britain and, controversially became the first British star to insist on a 'no apartheid' clause in her South African tour contract in 1964 (O'Brien, 1999, Chapter 4, passim). Dusty was a promoter of Black music, but also unequivocally popular. In Britain, her popularity reached a climax in December 1965 when she was voted the most popular World Female Singer by the *New Musical Express*, the first British female star to get this award record. Motown was started by Berry Gordy Junior in Detroit in 1959. When the Black Disc Jockeys organisation was established in America in 1956, Berry was given a platform to express his aims. With Tamla co-manager Mable John he lobbied DJs to break his sounds across the States. Marvelette, Katherine Anderson Schaffner, has stated "*We weren't just for black audiences, but both white and black. 'Please Mr Postman' was the one that broke down the colour barrier*" (Schaffner in Whitall, 1998, p. 56). Despite the significance of their contribution to popular music and, as I will argue in this chapter, to shaping often liberatory and pleasurable forms of femininity in both voice and self-fashioning for women across ethnicities, girl groups who made hits in the 1960s are now involved in litigious battles to be remunerated for and gain ownership of their work. Their efforts are being led by the Ronettes. In the 1950s and 1960s "*it was the exception rather than the rule if they [girl groups] were paid*" (Krum, 1998). Currently, over two hundred artists, including The Ronettes, the Shirelles, the Vandellas, the Shangri-Las, the Dixie Cups, Darlene Love and the Chantels have either sued or are engaged in legal proceedings against former record companies.





7. 'Cilla, Kathy and me', Dusty Springfield, *Radio Luxembourg Record Stars* annual, 1965, pages 14 and 15.



to a closer examination of the role played by music performers and their relationships with female audiences in the accounts offered by research participants, none of the existing definitions seemed useful or appropriate.<sup>15</sup> In some instances their accounts resonated with, or triggered my own memories.<sup>16</sup> Notions of ineffability, of feelings exceeding words, of transportation into other worlds and of degrees of yearning were expressed. For some, like Jean and Sandy, who had been listening to Dusty for the first time, as I was, as girls in the early 1960s, the ineffability of Dusty's voice, was respectively consigned to belonging to a radiant other world, beyond words, and an abstracted notion of excess:

Sandy: and it was like, following that, I mean, I remember being - I know I was a little girl but being so attracted to Kathy Kirby and then when Dusty came after that, it was like [sharp intake of breath] ... she was like sort of more. She was just like more ... I can't - I don't know how to describe more but I do remember being struck by the whole image, you know, it was like - you know, her eye make-up and her big hair and a long, sort of dramatic dress, and the way she sort of, [gestures] you know, when she was singing as well as the voice which was like the whole package she was just really...

AP: So you were just doing gestures there weren't you? Sort of - [copies her own impersonation of Dusty's hand gestures] it was a sort of gestural thing that...

Sandy: Absolutely, yeah, very much, yeah -

Gabrielle's iconic memory is of the powerful impact of Dusty's use of eye make-up.

AP: Can you remember where you heard her or saw her? Was it in your living room, or was it on the radio?

Gabrielle: It was on the television in the living room.

AP: And Ron [her husband] had some things to say about her ?

Gabrielle: Her make-up, yes. [...] She always used to have - I don't know, I don't know whether it was black mascara, very dark mas- er, was it mascara? No not mascara, er...-

AP: Was it - it was like, eyeliner, wasn't it?

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<sup>15</sup> I questioned whether 'audiences', 'connoisseurs', 'consumers' or 'fans' described the processes and relationships that were being discussed.

<sup>16</sup> I had unexpected sources of support in my early efforts. I had created a treasured memory work: "*A experienced pleasure in endless playing of the Isley Brothers' Summer Breeze with best friend Shaheen...*" In the course of the research, Shaheen made contact after 22 years having and subsequently visited bringing with her, without knowledge of this research, music compilations that included *Summer Breeze* that she also had treasured memories of us listening to.





## Dusty Springfield

Among all the dollies and birds of the hit parade Dusty is an original. There's nobody like that gal. Her clothes, her hair, her songs—and herself. Intelligent, charmingly nutty, or goonish. She's a great practical joker, at her best in the early hours of the morning after work. She spends a fortune on telephone calls and her big, white American car. She works like crazy, thinks deeply about a lot of things including the pop scene. She's a world-class star now but remains firmly the old original Dusty.



Gabrielle: Eyeliner, but eyeshadow -

AP: Yes, it looked like eye shadow.

Gabrielle: Eye shadow, yes.

AP: Like black eye shadow, it was quite distinctive, wasn't it?

Gabrielle: Yes, yes.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of 'Motown music' with which Dusty was frequently linked, although participants had favourite performers, they often spoke about the label's output as a whole, constituting a specific music 'far-off', with the capacity to arouse strong feelings and actions, frequently couched in physiological terms:

Jean: It did make me want to, oh I don't know, it sort of stirred my blood somehow, you know, made me want to dance and made me feel alive in a lot of ways, I just loved, I loved the sounds, you know, I loved the lyrics and, you know, and it made me think of far-off places, you know. [...] It was the beat. The beat sort of got into you and make you start to, you know, start to - you could feel yourself becoming invigorated by this and start to surge and you know, it wasn't as laid back you know, like I was saying with Nat King Cole and things like that.<sup>18</sup>

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Sandy: I just think it was the whole different experience from the Beatles and it was a very emotional and evocative and very - you are getting in touch with yourself, with your feelings kind of, you know, and that kind of thing were less conscious an experience, because I think such as The Beatles stuff for me -and I remember bits about when I was growing up, was very, sort of, you sang along with it and the lyrics were very simple and everything and it was nice and it was singalong thingy music but this was, this was much more emotional music and it could sort of separate you, you know, separate-your-feelings-from-your-thoughts I suppose,

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<sup>17</sup> Being such a characteristic, not to say caricatured feature of her excessive fashioning, our failure to identify precisely what constituted this look was an illuminating moment, compounding the notion of Dusty's otherworldliness. An oft-used media compromise is to describe Dusty as 'panda-eyed', a phrase coined for and associated principally with Dusty thereafter. The methods by which Dusty achieved her look also mystified the otherwise astute and vigilant *Ready Steady Go!* audiences. Davies remarks on how girls once experimented with boot polish to achieve the Dusty effect (Davies in O'Brien, 1999, p. 80).

<sup>18</sup> Jean credited Nat King Cole with the power to evoke this notion of being transported "*There was just something really, really nice and warm about this man and he was so laid back and he just you know, the piano, it was just the sound and just the lyrics and it just made you - and you know, would just wooooo, you'd float away, you know*" [Laughter]. She used the same expression to describe the impact of hearing steel band music for the first time: "*I remember now going to - to see a group called the Caribbean's they were a steel drum group [...] - I'd seen them twice, they came to Glasgow twice and that was amazing, I really enjoyed it. I just loved the sound and they were absolutely alive and it was like woooo you know*".



kind of music [...] you could kind of lose yourself, lose yourself and sort of - Oh, and it was all about love songs, but sort of, not just about love songs, but about getting together, you know.

Jean's concentration, and the seriousness with which she undertook the research process yielded detailed recollections and occasionally striking definitions. The amusement that this sometimes triggered I took as a mutual recognition that something was being newly minted, and therefore strange. Asked to describe the difference between Motown and other music, and after a long pause, Jean offered,

Jean: - a warmer - there was just something warm and creamy about it. [Laughter].

AP: What a perfect description.

Jean and AP [simultaneously] Warm and creamy! [Laughter]<sup>19</sup>

Ettie who recalled hearing a Dusty in a Glasgow salon in the mid 1960s stated "*Oh yes, [sings I don't know just what to do with-] Oh that was lovely, it infiltrates, there's no doubt about it.*"

Jean claimed that as a girl and young woman she had had no friends, no 'best pal', no dancing partners, no peers with shared interests in fashion or music. She discussed how in such circumstances music was nostalgically remembered as a comforting and omnipresent soundtrack:

AP: Did you share your enthusiasm for Dusty and Motown with any other female friends?

Jean: No.

AP: Right, right, so tell me a little bit about that. Why's that then?

Jean: I don't know. I think mostly - I was mostly a loner and my world was music. That was my world so I did buy a lot of music at weekends with my pocket money, listen to music all the time, listen to radio all the time and where - in fact I started work at 15 and where I worked we had music piped through the place the whole time so –<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Both Jean's parents had had an interest in music, bought records and sang about the house. Jean's mother had introduced her to the music of Dinah Washington and Ella Fitzgerald.

<sup>20</sup> Now more gregarious she played music: Dusty, Doris Day and other cherished performers first heard as a girl when guests visited. Her current job as a driving instructor meant that she spent time at home during the day alone "*When I go, I go in on a daytime, I put the music on, I have music all the time round about me you know, its got to be on and its just kind of fuelling me through the day and it sort of whisks me away to different place*". Music transported her nostalgically "*right back there, when I was younger, and I can sing and it carries me through the day really*". For other research participants, including Elizabeth consumption of music and music and film stars was often an intensely private activity "*I mean I did go to the cinema with pals to see Elvis's films but I don't remember, I don't remember us say having like a group crush on him or anything like that, I tended to keep my heroes or heroines quite secret*".



Although music itself was an important motor in the construction and maintenance of a 'faraway place' for Jean, she discussed how, as a girl she adapted and decorated her bedroom to fashion a 'wee world' where music achieved an added dimension:

I never really, I was always very much a loner. I had sort of friends, if you could call them friends and I had, I was in my own wee world basically, in music, fashion, design, I mean, one wall of my bedroom was just like one big collage of clippings out of magazines and it was all plastered all over my wall, all different things as well and – [...] the first Motown album I bought was a silver cover and oh, I can't describe the design, it was silver but it had shades of silver going through it with all the names of the, you know, the singles on it, small you know, and what I had, I had covered my whole room in all Motown and Dusty albums because I had got these runners, like plastic runners which I put on, stuck on the wall and slide the album so all my wall was really covered with all these albums you know [...] so I could then, like quite easily, lift them down and look at them but see, the designs on the cover were lovely [...] I collected beads from old necklaces and I stripped them all down and I created lights and curtains and sort of things draping about and also I painted the whole of the ceiling in my bedroom which took me, oh, for ages and I hand painted a wall all, just different colours and you know, so I could lie there at night with coloured lights going round, listen to the music and look up at the ceiling at just all these lovely colours on the ceiling, in fact, I tell you what, it was, it was at the time iced polystyrene tiles do you remember them? [...] My father had put them all round, it was insulate, to keep the house warm and I was, I wasn't really sort of, really into them, but I thought, I could do something with this to make it look a wee bit better. So I started hand painting them all you know, so that I had a design on the ceiling-

When I asked about the role music played in Jean's fashioned space she stated:

Jean: I think it completed the whole experience. I think the whole thing came together. It was just my away-from-it-world you know what I mean? Just a wee sort of Tardis and it was just like, completely different to anything else in the house, you know what I mean? And it was my world, you know what I mean? And it meant so much to me and with the music and the design, you know what I mean? It was me, it was me, I was probably trying to create me, aye.<sup>21</sup>

Many participants' articulations of yearning and bittersweet emotions associated with Dusty and

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<sup>21</sup> Asked about the importance of being able to fashion a space of one's own Jean was unequivocal: "Well I think it is really important, I think it is who you are, I think its everything, living, breathing the soul definitely, and who you are spiritually, I don't mean that in a religious way, I just mean that the environment feeling, you know what I mean? You can project yourself in life with other people". The music that completed this experience and played a part in the lives of many participants had the power to evoke emotions and feelings in ways that often exceeded commonplace assumptions of how, for example, girls growing up in the 1950s and 1960s consumed of popular music. Dusty was arguably pre-eminent in what has been described as "a new breed of [British] women singers who vocalised about anguished love" (Burton, 1996).



Motown go beyond self-narrativisation via lyrical content. Sandy suggested that the image and sound of Dusty combined in ways that articulated forms of ineffable homoerotic, identificatory and melancholic yearning:

Yeah, it was like that, it was like, that sort of, well, I think there can be pleasure in evoking sadness if, something about making you feel a sort of 'in loveness' and you can't - that kind of, almost deliciousness, I mean, there's different aspects of love aren't there? There's the sort of exciting and joyous bits, but there's also the can't have bits and things, I just remember sort of everything about her - really sort of - her sexiness and her gorgeousness and you know, how she looked but also the sadness of you know, well, you can't, you know, you can't have - I don't know how to describe it more than-

For Claire, an aficionado, academic and feminist it was in the minutiae of vocalisations of specific lyrics that Dusty's emotional force was felt allowing opportunities for self-narrativisation. Claire's account here is interesting in the effort she made to claw Dusty's performance of *Breakfast in Bed* out of the frame of feminine excess and into the realms of the tasteful:

Claire: Yes, yes, not just the voice but what she did with it, yes, it wasn't just that she had a great voice, but what she actually did with it, so she could sing a couple of lines, like she could sing a line, a few lines of *Breakfast in Bed* and her voice would crack, and that was quite deliberate, it was quite deliberate that her voice would crack to express - I'm trying to remember now what the line is, it's something about, *Please don't eat and run, it's been so long since I had you here* which is a double-entendre, but in fact, because of the cracked voice it becomes, it's absolutely desperate – [...] - absolutely desperate, but not overdone, you know, there's what I took to be an illicit affair, which perhaps somebody can, other people can tell me what it's about.

AP: I hadn't had it as an illicit affair.

Claire: I very much had it, very much as an illicit affair [...] *Please don't eat and run*, that's absolutely classic.

AP: Yes.

Claire: Without revealing too much about myself. [Laughter] [My emphasis]



For some participants, hearing specific recordings evoked profound emotional resonances recalled in vivid memories articulated through the lens of intervening years. Jean reiterated the notion of music as a soundtrack for her life, where Dusty was cast as both interpreter and confidante:

AP: Because quite a lot of Dusty's most well known songs are actually quite sad songs.

Jean: Aha, that's right.

AP: But you still enjoy -?

Jean: Because I suppose I had a mixture of that sort of melancholy, all that kind of stuff, do you know what I mean? I suppose in a lot of ways I was quite a lonely person and looking for love in a way, it was probably love that I could probably never get, do you know what I mean? It was that kind of, it was in my head you know, so these songs kind of fuelled it in a way.

AP: Did you - they have, did you have any sort of, like a fantasy world that – I mean, don't want to probe too deeply. [Laughter] Did you figure in fantasies when you were listening to this music or did she - was Dusty a fantasy figure for you at all?

Jean: Personally, it wasn't like that, no, I liked Dusty, I liked her singing, I like to watch her singing and I loved the music, again it took me into this fantasy world of meeting somebody who was going to be there and they were going to share [...] it wasn't the person, it's never been the person, the person I liked or whatever, were - there was never anything sexual orientated [Laughter].

Dusty's voice also became associated with further adult, unspoken ideas, the soundtrack to other forms of intimacies between femininities that Jean found it difficult to articulate even after many years living as an out lesbian:

Jean: I remember that day we'd be listening to it [Dusty on her Mum's radiogram] and Teresa [her aunt's friend] was up and we were all sitting and I think that maybe because of my age my aunt didn't want to say, but she come away with some sort of like slang word for Dusty Springfield you know, to Teresa, so I wouldn't sort of clock what she was really meaning, but I had a rough idea of what she was talking about, you know, and I thought, Oh, I didn't think she was actually thinking about that, you know, but I can't remember now how she put it over, it was that terminology she was using but it was –



AP: So what sort of impression did that have on you then when that started?

Jean: What she said about it? I thought, you know - [Laughter]

AP: Well you're pulling a very alarmed face there, just for the sake of the tape -

Jean: Well, I just thought, Oh my goodness! you know, because, I was – well, I was aware of it myself and I thought, Oh, how would she take it because I might be in Dusty's camp, you know.

Claire revealed that Dusty's death changed, but in no way concluded, a relationship that had had the capacity to arouse a range of strong if ambivalent emotions. This from a participant who was at pains to dissociate herself from the 'big weepies' and women who made 'doormats' of themselves:

Claire: I don't know if it's at all relevant because you haven't asked me, but I - maybe its not, but I certainly also found Dusty very frustrating and I suppose that's because you would write to her, although her secretary was very good at writing back, in the time I tried to communicate to her, I never heard anything and that was quite – she - I think again it was fear that she - just didn't, she just hid away, and I couldn't really get any - I got a photo, a signed photo, you know, but I never really - and I felt very, very sad about that because it was something – again, one having in a sense to say, you know, this is how you've changed my life, I'd really like to do that. I went to the grave and thought - I know I was overwhelmed with this sense of, damn it, she's cheated me again, although you know, I actually sat down there for a couple of hours but that was very disappointing and very sad, you need to be able to say to someone well, this is - so that was an aspect that, that I think you'll find quite a lot of fans – [...] she was very reclusive in the 1990s, very, very reclusive and in the end it was too upsetting, I just didn't write any more because I thought this is - I will just probably write, to speak to her secretary and so on because she wouldn't really communicate, it didn't make - I felt quite offended until I met another fan who'd met her in the '90s and he said she shook from head to foot when he met her, she was very nice but she was shaking with fright at meeting people and that gave me a tiny insight into how difficult it must actually be [...] so it wasn't all - so it's not, certainly not plain sailing to be a fan, it's frustrating and I don't know if that's relevant to anything you are doing at all.

### **Dusty's *Island of Dreams***

My first sighting of Dusty was when I saw her on TV singing *Island of Dreams* with the Springfields. I became an instant fan. I fell in love with that wonderfully evocative, soulful voice. With her dynamic delivery and powerful presence (Grocock, 1999, p. 49).





9. Veronica Lake, film still in *Film Portraits 3* annual, 1949, unpaginated, coloured-in by reader Fay.



Although Coates has dubbed rock a “*bourgeois bohemia...a space of respite from everyday life in the real world in which the rock formation is imbricated*” (Coates, 1997, p. 57) notions of escapism for audiences of girls and women *through pop and soul* are routinely disparaged in the rock ideology.<sup>22</sup> Escapism via forms of feminine excess whether performed by white female stars or Black soul and R&B performers of either gender has tended to be read as a condition of false consciousness and a vacuous assault on taste.<sup>23</sup> Jean’s uses of star performances, can be understood as related to the imaginative refiguring of Hollywood stars by Stacey’s respondents. Just as the literal vividness of the Hollywood *mis en scene* offered up a world of pleasures practices for female respondents,<sup>24</sup> so the sounds of America and the proliferation of pop, music and film texts were to appeal to the generation of female fans in this later period. The modes of music reception, typically on domestic radio equipment such as hand-held transistors, and the expansion in sales of record players such as that used by Jean, her mother and her aunt was critical to many fans in forming a pleasurable identification of difference as well as a new habitus of consumption.<sup>25</sup> Jean described a context where she was able to play a soundtrack again and again within a controlled, private context to construct to a sensory environment absolutely, “*different from anything else in the house*”. Her deployment of Dusty and Motown stars and her later fusing of Dusty with an epiphany regarding her own (and Dusty’s and neighbour Teresa’s?) lesbianism, endorses McClary’s call to address the neglected territories of music and personal identities.<sup>26</sup> Jean’s ‘wee world’ presents a model whereby the context of the domestic

<sup>22</sup> Coates claims that (Early Mod) Dusty’s feminine excess precluded her from serious consideration due to the rock ideology in America (Coates, 1997). Significantly, Bob Dylan is the exception to Elizabeth’s rule that her heroes and heroines were consumed in private. This was initiated when a friend revealed her own love of Dylan after which they went public. We agreed that this was arguably an eminently respectable crush to have publicly announced in 1960.

<sup>23</sup> As opposed to the meaningful assault on taste by punk.

White male rock performers who have performed femininity (Bowie, Bolan to Alice Cooper and Aerosmith) can be interpreted as playing with the signifiers of gender in ways that are distinct from the Black male soul combos of Motown or Philadelphia. Although this may be only superficially addressed here, the former are considered to be ironically and knowingly referencing femininity and Black male precedents, in ways that blur to ultimately restore white male heterosexuality. The latter have historically used forms of feminine excess in distinct ways that are, again, too complex to discuss adequately in this thesis but may be linked to notions of respectability as Wilmer’s comments cited earlier suggest. Contextualising Dusty’s work, O’Brien has written “*In the sixties [Charles Shaar] Murray was a counterculture writer for the underground newspaper, IT. Then, as a rule, he listened to Jimi Hendrix, blues and psychedelic rock, not bland pop. ‘We regarded the big Italianate ballad [Dusty’s You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me was originally Lo Che No Vivo Senza Te] as the worst’*” (Charles Shaar Murray cited in O’Brien, 1999, p. 249).

Boys’ rock consumption has become mythologised, caricatured and globalised, for example, in the annual World Air Guitar championships of ‘*bedroom –mirror style guitar miming*’ (<http://www.omvf.net/english.html>). Girls’ consumption of popular music, particularly performed by female stars is poorly represented in popular and academic literature.

<sup>24</sup> Where life in Beverley Hills consumed in star magazines could be played out in the strikingly contrasted context of an open cast coal mine (Stacey, 1994, pp. 159–160).

<sup>25</sup> Carroll has noted that even the poor radio sound quality of pop broadcasts in the 1960s is evocative of nostalgic yearning, “*There was something about the interference that gave a rather dreadful, Americanised evening radio show a sense of mystery and distance, both physical and epochal*” (Carroll, 1997, p. 40).

<sup>26</sup> “*Literature and visual art are almost always concerned [...] with the organisation of sexuality, the construction of gender, the arousal and channelling of desire. So is music, except that music may perform these functions even more effectively than other media. Since few listeners know how to explain how it creates its effects, music gives the illusion of operating independently of cultural mediation. It is often received [...] as a mysterious medium within which we seem to encounter our own most private feelings. Thus music is able to contribute heavily (if surreptitiously) to the shaping of individual identities: along with other*



space, is re-constructed in ways that involved abstract and decorative fashionings and where popular music is both the motor for creativity and completes the personal habitus.

In her consumption of albums, Jean might be construed as a collector but this is an inadequate description. The forms of appreciation, connoisseurship or fanship exemplified by *Dusty Bulletin* subscribers,<sup>27</sup> can be distinguished from the forms of identification available, for example via star representations on album covers (as Negus and Gilroy have pointed out) enjoyed by female fans of Dusty.<sup>28</sup> Rather ironically, given the proliferation of Dusty musical compilations in all format in recent years, the *Bulletin* defines the type of Dusty fan who collects all her material as a 'completist'. (Bulletin, Issue 36)<sup>29</sup> Val Wilmer provides an alternative model with which to contextualise Jean's use of albums in her account of her own use of them as props to enhance the pleasures of music consumption in the domestic space. The sound of music, and the pleasures of album covers, shared with a West Indian friend created a treasured moment, insulated against the hostilities of the racist, urban environment of London in the 1960s: "*The quality of American pressings of Jazz and Blues records e.g. Blue Note and Riverside then was superb and the sound was recorded in a special way. US albums were especially popular for their thick card covers too. We would prop these up around the room as we listened*" (Wilmer, 1989, p. 114).

The trajectory of identifications that links Hollywood stars to black soul and Motown stars and Dusty to Jean and Sandy is evoked in the actions of recasting and reinventing through the production of dramatic and often private restylings of self and surroundings. This is arguably most easily achieved through the dyeing and styling of hair. For Dusty, as for many female spectators of Hollywood movies, the allure of stars lives is epitomised by the mythical Los Angeles, impossibly contrasted to her domestic life in the 1950s. In an appropriately overblown introduction to her biography of Dusty, O'Brien uses the props of the mirror and the Hollywood star film still<sup>30</sup> in the wee world of the 'chubby

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*influential media such as film, music teaches us how to experience our own emotions, our own desires, and even [...] our own bodies. For better or for worst, it socialises us*" (McClary, 1991, p. 53).

<sup>27</sup> *The Bulletin* is the key publication for collectors of Dusty information and memorabilia and although female fans of Dusty contribute to it, to Dusty Internet sites, theme nights, conventions, it primarily records the practices and interests of male fans of Dusty. Dusty contributed occasional letters from the early 1980s to *The Bulletin*'s precursor *Dusty International*. In the last issue before her death, all the letters in the letters page are from male aficionados. Claire was the only subscriber of the research participants.

<sup>28</sup> A memory work recalled incidents of desire and identification triggered by album covers: "*A was fascinated Nina (with scraped back, long, blonde hair) from the singing duo Nina and Frederick on the cover of one of her Dad's 45s. A would also often look at the unnamed glamorous showgirls that surrounded Charlie Drake on the full-colour glossy album that her Dad owned of 'My Boomerang Won't Come Back.'* transfixed by the contrast between his body and theirs. They had bundles of (blonde) hair, coiled and piled and wore encrusted 'circus-like costumes, had impossibly large eyelashes and stilettos".

<sup>29</sup> Notwithstanding the diverse ways that subscribers to the *Bulletin* express their identification with Dusty's life, work or persona, the forms of fascination present themselves as characteristic of systems Cixous has termed 'Economies of the Proper'; systems that prioritise propriety, order, systemisations and hierarchies (Moi, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> June Haver, who "*inhabited a world that was rich, glittering and forbidden*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 1).



tomboy' Mary O'Brien to set the scene for her metamorphosis where "*In a bedroom in 1950s London she created a girl called Dusty*" (O'Brien, 1999, pp. 1-2).<sup>31</sup>

'Dusty' was arguably created by hair bleaching and bouffanting.<sup>32</sup> For Jean and Sandy the Dustyisation of their hair announced their identification with dissident forms of femininity and an association with other worlds and sensations that could not be easily articulated.

Identifications between Dusty and her fans include iconic memories, Sandy's state of inloveness, first with Kathy Kirby then Dusty, who was simply *more* and whose gestures were still rehearsed in an act of pleasure, was centred on the abundance of signifiers that both stars had to offer: red lips, big, blonde, bouffanted hair, eye make-up, long, dramatic dress, gestures, beauty spot, the arresting voice...<sup>33</sup> For the research participants and in my own memory work corpus, the notion of creatures of abundant femininity from another world included specific friends and family members, who fashioned themselves through more plural identifications or specific Dustyisation. (Sandy's aunt, A's Auntie Sue, Pat the rogue hairdresser...) Black stars of both sexes also epitomised both glamour and ineffable otherworldliness for many participants.<sup>34</sup> For Dusty and her fans "*National difference [had] provided space for particular forms of fantasy*" (ibid. p. 118).<sup>35</sup> The white participants in this study, and Dusty too, demonstrated that their association of glamour/Americaness appears to have relatively unproblematically extended to encompass models of African American and Black British glamour.<sup>36</sup> For Dusty and many research participants pleasures in specific sounds allowed for an array

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<sup>31</sup> Cilla Black has discussed her transformation from mousy convent schoolgirl to auburn would-be star as a result of her first hair-dyeing experiments with Woolworths' Camillatone (Denton, 2003).

The extent to which Dusty's hair fashioning came to be iconic can be measured in the routine use of images of Dusty to stand for fashioning in the 1960s. For example, in a recent article in *The Sunday Times* magazine 'the do's' of the decade were as follows: Dusty, 1960s, Farrah Fawcett, 1970s, Joan Collins, 1980s, Meg Ryan, 1990s (Moore, 2000, pp. 36-7).

<sup>33</sup> Stacey has demonstrated that for British women in the 1940s and 1950s "*It was the 'abundance' of signifiers of femininity represented by Hollywood stars that was seen as particularly pleasurable [for the British women in the audience]...[...] the palpably felt difference of the wealth luxury and glamour of Hollywood stars to the deprivation and drabness of the lives of the spectators. Hollywood stars were thought to live life as if 'on another planet'...*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 235). She highlights the function of close up displays of women, producing a fascination "*remembered as a form of intimacy [...] as a form of personalisation of the Hollywood star*" by female spectators and notes that this contradicts the feminist interpretation of close-ups as "*fetishism and fragmentation*" (ibid. p. 206).

<sup>34</sup> My interests and line of questioning clearly indicated an interest in soul music, however, I was frequently surprised by unprompted references to Black stars: the young Shirley Bassey remembered as admirably struggling for attention in a Working Man's club, Jean's recalling of the arrival the Motown stars to Britain in an otherwise bleak and forgotten vista of TV programming, Aretha Franklin inspiring Melanie to practise sax, Ettie remembering the Shirelles, Bassey, The Supremes, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers being played in the salon on Sauchiehall Street, the impact of Black stars including Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson and Sheila Ferguson on the clients and trainee hairdressers at Northend College contributed an impression of the pervasiveness and noteworthiness of Black stars on working-class participants' lives from the late 1950s on. It remains to be seen whether this would have been the case in research conducted with mainly middle class women (or men). Are Black artists principally attracting working-class audiences? Significantly in a memo after interviewing Claire, I noted she had felt it necessary to contextualise her fanship of Dusty within the frame of her interest in white rock bands Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Stones and Little Feat.

<sup>35</sup> However, identifications with the forms of femininity enacted by both male and female Black stars from the late 1950s noted by Wilmer, and extensively marked in texts on and by Dusty and the participants in this study, extends Stacey's account of the allure of white Americanness "*When Duke Ellington and Count Basie brought their polished big bands over it was, said one observer, 'like a dream'...*" *Racism was temporarily shelved in the face of genuine wonderment at the gods being here in our midst...*" (Wilmer, 1991, p. 40).

<sup>36</sup> This is also cross cut with racism (see Sandy's accounts in the section 'Sound of Musical Excess' concerning Madeline Bell)



of identifications, emotions and self-narrativisations, which can be interpreted in relation to ideas about Blackness and Black voices. Dusty frequently cited a treasured memory of hearing Black American popular music for the first time and emphasised 'the immediacy of her love affair':

I was passing a record shop in Times Square and the Exciters' *Tell him* was blasting out. The attack in it! It was the most exciting thing I had ever heard. The only black music I'd heard in England was big-band jazz and Latin Music, which I loved. But this was a revelation (Dusty in O'Brien, 1999, p. 38).<sup>37</sup>

Jean and Claire make clear the potential for pleasurable and bittersweet self-narrativisation available via lyrical interpretation of Dusty's oeuvre, but Dusty herself relegated the role of lyrics, unequivocally linking the emotional investment of the performance in sounds.<sup>38</sup> Claire derived pleasure from performances by Dusty on two registers: via lyrics,<sup>39</sup> and through Dusty's modulation of sounds to create powerful emotionally interpellating moments in her recorded performances, notably the 'desperate cracking' of the voice in *Breakfast in Bed*.<sup>40</sup>

Dusty was notoriously fastidious and invariably dissatisfied with the sound recording methods available to her throughout her recording career, particularly in her early years as a solo performer when there was no access to double tracking or overlaying.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This revelatory episode resembles research participants' accounts of hearing Dusty for the first time. For Whiteley, it is the sound component in popular music that allows for the broadest opportunities for identification "Whilst lyrics and song titles suggest a preferred reading, music's abstract character allows for a mapping of individual experiences and meaning that provides a sense of identity and a fluidity of engagement" (Whiteley, 1997, p. xxxii).

<sup>38</sup> Dusty: I don't pay any attention to lyrics until they are over. I'm more occupied with hitting the notes.

Q: Surely that cannot always have been the case?

Dusty: Yes. Lyrics mean very little to me.

Q: But don't you have to be thinking through the drama of a song to sing them like you do?

Dusty: No. The drama always comes from where the notes come for me: musical drama rather than lyrical drama. If they happen to coincide, it's wonderful (Dusty Bulletin No.36, November, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Lyrics tell the story of emotionally charged aspects of her life, she admired Dusty's adoption of roles such as 'hooker' and 'mistress' in the performance of specific songs.

<sup>40</sup> In his essay on Gracie Fields, Frith noted that in her emotionally invested performances she "knew, of course... that sounds and accents and tones of voice, just as much as words, have a public and political meaning" (Frith, 1989, p. 71).

Claire contrasts this with the 'crap' results of efforts to produce so-called feminist music endured on visits to a feminist friend. This genre that privileged the significance of lyrics can be seen to have derived from tastes in music expounded in influential feminist texts such as *Spare Rib*. In 1975, using Marvin Gaye, Dusty and other soul stars as illustrations, Liz Waugh and Terri Goddard critiqued the sexist-orientated lyrics of contemporary music, indicting soul as sustaining misogyny and the "cult of femininity [which] persuades us that women are romantic, weak, emotional, possessive, our lives revolving around love and most important of all, 'Every woman should be/ what her man wants her to be' (Marvin Gaye)'" (Waugh and Goddard, 1975). However, more recently a less monolithic approach to music has been developed by feminists involved in the study of popular music. For example, Whiteley has acknowledged that specific sound recording techniques are important determinants in an understanding of both style and culture, and "the sense of a specific physical space that can be created that has potentially enormous impact on the power and types of gestural resonance which listeners feel" (Whiteley, 1997, p. xiv).

<sup>41</sup> As a TV performer, Dusty was attempting to reproduce the exhilarating, elusive sound she had experienced as a fan of the newly emerging American soul music. Elvis Costello, notes that her covers of Motown hits like *Heatwave* were "somewhat encumbered by the rockin' BBC band" (Pomphrey, 1994). She found recording in Britain at Philips "an extremely dead studio" and notoriously recorded *I close my eyes and count to ten* in the studio's ladies toilets, where she had identified more effective acoustics.



Her efforts to project the levels of emotional excess, an ‘overblown extravaganza’ that she desired were extreme and defy contemporary expectations of female performers: “She would gather her courage together, enter the studio, have the music cranked up high in her headphones to a decibel level ‘on the threshold of pain’ and then sing. That is how she forced herself to perform at that level of exhilaration” (O’Brien, 1999, p. 49). This emotional investment in sound, generating “the mysterious glamour of Dusty’s voice” (Williams, 1999, p. 18) was in turn transmitted to many research participants and recorded in my own memory work texts, Dave Shrimpton confirms that these efforts to produce an abstract, inexplicable studio effect made Dusty’s studio sound appealing to a spectrum of listeners: “That intense pitch, coupled with Ivor Raymonde’s distortion techniques, contributed to the Spectorish sound on Dusty’s sixties pop hits, and that appealed to the entire cross section of the market...everyone was buying her records. Not even the Stones or the Beatles had that” (Shrimpton cited in O’Brien, *ibid.* p. 49). The ineffable difference in sound and image, paradoxically palpable and elusive in Dusty’s oeuvre is noted by fans, including biographer O’Brien as richly connotative, thrilling and troubling.<sup>42</sup>

The ubiquity and accessibility of popular sound recordings exceeds that of reproductions of classic films, multiplying the instances of repetition for audiences and fans of popular music, and allowing for powerful chance encounters, as in Dusty’s treasured memory of first hearing The Exciters.<sup>43</sup> For Claire and Jean, exposure to repeated listenings of songs heard first more than twenty years before is virtually a daily event. Dusty’s nostalgia, yearning and memories of identification with specific Black sounds and performers anticipates the (homosexual) forms of identification that her fans later record about her own. Dusty’s memories contain an auto-critique, a retrospective acknowledgement of failed femininity, and a confession of idealised identification.<sup>44</sup> However, for her fans and those who were arrested by her enactment of ambivalent, dissident and excessive femininity, Dusty offered up a new and ineffable, otherworldliness that contained, in the 1960s at least, an as yet

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<sup>42</sup> “I first became fascinated with Dusty when I was in my teens. I remember seeing a monochrome picture of a woman with peroxide blonde hair and heavily shadowed eyes. She exuded a sense of mystery, of being distant and troubled, a woman with a complex past. All her vulnerability and passion seemed to be expressed in her voice, an utterly distinctive, soulful cry” (O’Brien, 1999a, p. 51).

<sup>43</sup> As Frith has pointed out, even for those who are not fans or willing audiences, music of all forms is an unavoidable daily hazard (2003). Coupled with this, the industry of reproduction of iconic stars including Dusty ensures that reissued versions and compilations proliferate alongside nostalgia-driven themed collections. It could also be argued that film audiences are less likely to be exposed to the whole work than listeners are to a three and a half minute record or even an album or compact disc. As Jean demonstrates, music can surround the listener all day.

<sup>44</sup> Recorded as a failure to match Franklin’s expertise. Dusty here illustrates Stacey’s central argument that “*The extent to which femininity is defined by patriarchal culture as an unattainable visual image of desirability... thus the sense of loss for women evoked by nostalgic desire... is bound up in precisely this unattainability of the ideal feminine image... Thus it is the particular designation of femininity as image which gives nostalgia such potency for women*” (*ibid.* pp. 66-67).



unspoken articulation of soulful, homoerotic, yearning that confounded parents and critics alike, her iconic excessive voice and fashioning pejoratively read as forms of Blackness:

Claire: I think it is something to do with the communication bit, is the essence of it and identifying - it's a question about why does some singer make you feel differently from others? And it's something to do with, in order to communicate the emotions that you have got yourself and not being able to express - I can't really put it any clearer than that.

#### 4.3. A touch of Dusty: expressing to excess

**Transformation, creative self-fashioning and dissident rites of passage.**

The kind of bittersweet passion she expressed in her singing was not anything that I had ever experienced in my relationships with men. And yet when she sang I was moved by every yearning note, every grand dramatic gesture (Grocock, 1999, p. 49).

Dusty was emphatically and atypically excessive. Contemporary popular literature, academic criticism and research accounts suggest that my own iconic memory of her excess is indubitably a collective one. Her hair, make-up, encrusted garments, gestures and voice fascinated many girls and women in peculiar and enduring ways. However, Dusty's fashioning was frequently regarded as a joke by the media.<sup>45</sup> Paradoxically, the epitome of glamour for many, she became emblematic as a model of vulgar excess, to post-punk, queered sensibilities. Dusty cultivated an excessive, oddball profile.<sup>46</sup> She was thought excessive in her naïve but spunky refusal to stomach apartheid, for punching Buddy Rich, (Valentine and Wickham, 2000) for her drug taking and for being, and coming out as lesbian.<sup>47</sup> As far as her musical performances are concerned Dusty tellingly referred to herself "*a method singer*". (Pomphrey, 1994) The trope of excess permeates the texts of Dusty including the array of research participants accounts. These contributions cross cut my early reading of Dusty with new definitions

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<sup>45</sup> As early as 1969 the *Pop Weekly* annual stated "*Jokes about Dusty's wigs and her mascara have kept comedians going for ages*" (Hand, 1969, p. 23). O'Brien has noted that parodying Dusty's appearance became commonplace on British TV as her popularity rose: "*Male TV comedians mimicked her act, dressing up in wigs, gowns and massive false eyelashes, and calling themselves Rusty Springboard*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 181).

<sup>46</sup> She was notorious for her alleged hobby of throwing food and crockery, her practical jokes and her obsessive-compulsive behaviour in and out of the studio (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 22, O'Brien, 1999, p. 55). Resolutely self-deprecating she exceeded the limits of respectability arguably more than her contemporaries, other middle-class convent girls gone bad, Marianne Faithfull and Cathy McGowan, refusing to entertain a so-called lavender marriage or indeed a regular male consort for the purposes of courting the teen media.

<sup>47</sup> Polly Perkins was an out lesbian on the British pop scene in the 1960s and "*was famed for speaking parlare (gay argot), wearing Carnaby Street pin-striped suits and songs like 'Superdyke'*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 176). However, Dusty's popularity made her eventual outing an arguably more significant event.



that connect notions of excess with style, creativity, rites of passage and forms of what I have defined as 'dissident femininity'.<sup>48</sup>

### **Fashioning to excess**

Mary O'Brien's contemporary at school, Liz Thwaites, remembers the transformation of Dusty in a way that emphasises the dramatic impact of feminine excess in Britain in the 1950s:

Obviously she didn't like her image because when she left [the convent] school she changed it completely. You wouldn't have recognised her. We went back to a reunion a year after we left school. She walked in and we just couldn't believe it! Fully made-up, hair dyed blonde, all done up, dressed in high-heeled shoes. Nobody had seen her really since she'd left. We were whispering to each other, 'Have you seen Mary O'Brien?' It was as if she was in fancy dress!... That beehive image didn't appeal to me...It was very tarty. So much eye make-up it was extraordinary she had the ability to do it. You have to learn how to put that muck on. We were all in awe of her after the change (Thwaites cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 19).

The ambivalences in Thwaites' comments reflect the consensus on forms of in/appropriate femininity found in many contemporary texts such as girls' annuals, school rules, and the discourses of popular music lyrics over this period weighted towards a pejorative reading of feminine excess. Research participants' accounts of women's fashioning regimes in post-war Britain frequently generated an impression of seditious, mannered experimentation by girls and women with new forms of femininity, constrained by crude or scant fashioning tools and materials and social and religious disapprobation. Jean presented a picture of pervasive excess, in part inspired by TV representations, that has clearly infected female family members:

Jean: <sup>49</sup> I think she [Mother] felt my hair was actually ok the way it was and I shouldn't be just following everybody else because they were dyeing their hair blonde, you know. I should think for myself and don't - you know - and you're watching too much television, you know. I mean, my sister-in-law had her hair a bit like Dusty's, she was dark haired but dyed her hair blonde, you know, and wore it like that with -

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<sup>48</sup> Noliwe Rooks has used the term dissident hair to describe the effect on whites of African American vernacular hairstylings (Rooks, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> ...After bleaching her hair at home using a toothbrush and Boots peroxide, aiming to create the effect of iconic bleached blonde girls at school fused with Dusty style...



AP: A bouffant?

Jean: Oh aha, aha, I remember the French Roll, I mean she'd a French Roll, Christine, my sister-in-law and my mother had a French Roll, and a beehive.

[...]

AP: Did she have a beehive around the time you were dyeing it - or - describe her hair?

Jean: Yes, aye, she was. Her hair again was my colouring, which is sort of dark and my mother started to dye her hair auburn. [...] Aha, right up until she died her hair was getting lighter but it was a lot darker, you know, with no - it was sort burnt red in a way - and it was to see how high you could get your beehive, because her sister had the same - she had a lot of sisters and they would all meet up at the weekend and would see whose beehive was the highest. [Laughter] My mum's was the highest.

Elizabeth also linked the development of her own confident fashioning of glamour to film and music stars:

Elizabeth: I did feel glamorous. I would say when I got into my twenties when I used to wear a lot of eye make-up and the hair was still bouffanted or – yes, I did feel by that time I'd acquired the skills and would say that, [indecipherable] Elizabeth Taylor definitely, and later I felt that, you know, to be glamorous was to be - to look like an Italian film star and really I don't think Dusty Springfield was far from the two - as far as the eye make-up was concerned, it was kind of in the same -

When asked, Elizabeth rejected the idea that the overblown fashioned look of the late 1950s and 1960s was, at that time understood as camp:

Elizabeth: The idea of camp just wasn't ever in my mind and I don't ever remember it being mentioned ever. I don't ever remember anybody, anyone referring to - well even using the word camp and certainly I don't ever remember any of my female friends who also liked Dusty or modelled themselves on Dusty, in terms of make-up and hairdo, ever speaking about her in terms of camp or anything like that. No, she was just she was fanatically well groomed and think there was bit of a legacy of some sort of values that had been inculcated earlier but she was glamorous as opposed to, well, anything else. Yes, she was glamorous that's all I can say.

Sandy's achievement of glamour is recorded as an iconic memory of a highly fashioned Dustified look:



Sandy: Yeah, I mean the one that stands out, it was like, me and Pauline in the salon when I was getting a bit older, because I was a schoolgirl when I was in there you know, when I was 13, but I mean slightly older and we definitely had this - it was parted in the middle which was definitely one of Dusty's hairdos, it was parted in the middle up to there [gestures to middle of crown] and then, even though we'd got long hair we sort of got that and really backcombed it up and then smoothed it over and lacquered it and we had these sort of ringlet things here [gestures at side of face] and Pauline and I, I mean she was ten years older than me, but we had these identical hairstyles and at one stage we both had - and this was, I mean, probably when I was sixteen you know, so it was quite young in many ways, but we had one piece of hair from there [gestures to front of hair] that was bleached just one strand of bleached hair that we sort of tucked behind our ear [...] Yeah, and fashioned, you know, to mean a sort of, every bit of it, you know, it's been done into a particular style, you know, it's not been left to be free and everything but a really fashioned hairdo, you know.<sup>50</sup>

Working-class girls growing up in the 1950s and 1960s had accessible models of glamour: on TV and radio, at the cinema, in the proliferating literature for girls, and occasionally performing live in their neighbourhood:

Elizabeth: Yes, yes, this was the time when working men's clubs were the venues like the training grounds for performers, they all did their apprenticeships, singers and comedians and so on, so, yes I remember in Eastland's club [seeing Shirley Bassey] as a young woman and her trying to get attention from the audience who were all chattering away and drinking, yes - so - but, but I thought of Shirley Bassey in this, the glamorous mould you know, like Dusty Springfield, like Sophia Loren, like the film stars it was, yes, it was a glamour thing.

For Sandy the fashioning of music stars, over and above their vocal performances, created cherished iconic memories that had impacted upon her early experimentation with self-fashioning:

I don't remember the first time I heard her [Dusty's] voice, but I do remember the first time that I saw her on television, which - I just remember her wearing a long dress and the hairstyle was probably different than it came later, it was more Kathy Kirby because she was, like, just coming - just after Kathy Kirby is probably my first memory, something I wanted to do, make

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<sup>50</sup> The excessive smells associated with feminine fashioning are remembered vividly by Sandy: *"I remember very much strong smells of hairspray you know, very sort of plasticcy hairspray that was probably the - and I remember the smells of lipstick and so on, I don't - I can't remember, I mean, if you if somebody sort of flashes it under me nose I would be able to say that was it"*. Vicky Wickham and lover Nona Hendryx used to have Dusty stay with them in New York in the early 1970s and remembered the smell of Dusty's fashionings: *"it would be a week after she left that finally, they could remove the traces of her presence: the fine coating of face powder and the thick smell of hair spray that lay all over the spare room"* (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 75).



myself look a bit like, you know, when I was really, really little, I must have been about eight, so it was a bit after that, but I remember seeing Dusty and her hair, and how dramatic it was. So really, I think although I was probably interested in music, I was more interested in the visual.<sup>51</sup>

### Dissident femininity

Fashioning femininity has been broadly read by feminists as a sign of co-option by women and girls into passivity under patriarchy. These views contrasted with and confronted the normative assumptions of femininity as natural and appropriate, not to say required of women. However, research participants discussed the ways that involvement in specific forms of fashioning feminine excess, modelled on ‘fanatically groomed’ figures like Dusty, troubled authority figures and could often be interpreted as disruptive and dissident.<sup>52</sup> Here, Sandy’s memory links Dusty’s eye make-up with her sexuality, both of which had provoked her father’s hostility:

Sandy: I think at the time certainly, in my family - because I remember particular - [...] I remember my Dad’s hostility towards Dusty, I remember that really vividly and my impressions were that she wasn’t taken that seriously, it was like, popular music was certainly not what I kind of learned about after, about soul stuff and sort of, how her voice was compared to black women, but it was just like, she was in the charts and she was in the hit parade, kind of thing and that my Dad was really angry about it with her black eyes and, you know, and now when I think back - because Carol [her current girlfriend] said to me that her Dad was also very hostile to Dusty it made me think that what we didn’t know was about sort of things, about sexuality at the time that made them very anti her, but we didn’t know that, we just knew that he was saying “*black-eyed bugger*” and all that, you know, because of her mascara and her eyeliner and everything.<sup>53</sup>

Gabrielle’s love of Dusty was not shared by her husband Ron who found Dusty’s make-up difficult to tolerate:

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<sup>51</sup> The pleasures afforded by excessive models of fashioning and the proximity of materials with which to fashion to excess, within a generation of the deprivations and literal uniformity of war-issue garments in fabrics, detailing on garments, cosmetics and hair products is expressed by Sandy, in her memory of acquiring a garment, resembling those seen by her on a TV *Summertime Special*, bought for her by a much-loved, Dusty look-alike aunt: “*But yeah, and it was just like in white, but I think it had polka dots on, yellow polka dots and these lilac things but they were - was a bit of smocking across here as I remember and it was, it was like - and I remember my Aunty at the time, I mean she was like, she wasn’t very old, she was like 10 years older than us, but she had the bouffant, you know she had a very Dusty - it wasn’t platinum but it was like a strawberry blondey, bouffant thing, she was really into Dusty, my Aunty and she had the eyelashes painted on you know -*”.

<sup>52</sup> Dusty’s femininity was never squared with patriarchal demands for subjection and was the subject of speculation and criticism: “*Throughout her career Dusty has attracted the attention of the tabloid press. Her peroxide bouffant, black make-up and convent-school education spelled trouble. The combination of vulnerability and rebel glamour ensured that she was at the mercy of the headlines rather than controlling them*” (O’Brien, 1999, p. 11).

<sup>53</sup> Sandy at first did not have access to a portable transistor radio to take to her bedroom. She was less able to consume Dusty privately but frequently watched Dusty performing on the TV with other family members. Moffitt has also recorded her memories of her father’s distaste and her love for Dusty’s ‘mucky’ eyes (Moffitt, 1999, p. 50).



AP: So - but Ron was saying that he thought the make-up was a bit -

Gabrielle: He didn't like her eyes like that. No. [...] Ron used to say, "*What's with her eyes boy?*" [mimicking Ron's Welsh accent] "*It's as though she's had -got two black eyes.*"  
[Laughter]

Jean's memories of Dusty also conflate notions of dissident cosmetic acts (her mother considered make-up 'a sin') and unnameable sexuality:

AP: [...] I wondered whether, thinking back to the Dusty stuff, did you ever identify or use the word about Dusty that she seemed to be camp?

Jean: No. I used to visit my aunt, my mother's sister, who I was very close to, at weekends and things and she had a good friend of hers, a younger woman who used to come round and was friendly with my aunt and they would talk about Dusty Springfield and I overheard things about, you know, Dusty [...] and my aunt was saying things about Dusty and so was Teresa.

AP: Right, were they things about her sexuality or were they things about her camp appearance?

Jean: About her sexuality and also about her eye make-up.

AP: Tell me.

Jean: Because it couldn't have been good for her eyes, that was the worry, the worry was, too much eye make-up on her eyes and that would cause her damage in the way that it was used and that was what they spoke about.

AP: And what did they say about her sexuality?

Jean: Oh, that they'd heard that she was one of them. [Laughter] I mean I'm going back -

AP: So they didn't actually use the word lesbian?

Jean: No, no, no, no, no.

AP: So did they actually use the word camp?



Jean: No, no, they didn't use the word camp at all.

Jean's mother told her "*on and on and on and on*" of the dangers of narcissism.<sup>54</sup> However, her will to adorn and perform to the soundtrack of Dusty and Motown in the privacy of her 'wee world' prevailed:

My gran was a churchgoer, not a Mormon or anything, [as Jean's mother was from 1962] but I think my mother picked up a lot of that you know, that, you've not to be too vain, don't look too long in the mirror because you'll see the devil, aha, aha, aye. I used to believe that when I was younger, I used to be frightened to look in the mirror because I would see the devil and pride comes before a fall, and don't be too proud, and don't be too vain and – [...] The other thing I used to love was actually, there was a long – a full-length mirror and I used to sort of, I think everybody probably had done this – is actually sing in the mirror and you know, sort of move and have your sort of false microphone which would be an old recorder I had, just the mike, you know [Laughter] It looked better.

AP: So would you actually be doing your own type of performance to it or were you directly mimicking Dusty then?

Jean: No, it was just my own stuff, aye, it was just my own stuff aha, aha.

AP: And did you do that with the Motown –?

Jean: Oh yes, ohhh, aha, definitely, definitely.

Jean's mother's objections to 'gaudiness' were being supplanted by a dissident femininity that took pleasure in excessive displays of colour, fabrics and fashionings, inspired by film and media:<sup>55</sup>

Jean: I kind of just sort of adapted and did a lot of the stuff myself because my mother used to say, "*You're a strange lassie*". [Laughter] But I always thought like Mary Quant and all - all that Carnaby Street and all that I bought - there was a place in Argyle Arcade and it was a branch of Carnaby Street that came up here and I bought a fantastic pair of green hipsters which were actually sort of thick velvet and this great big shiny - and I remember this, it was skinny

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<sup>54</sup> Jean implied that her mother had inherited these views on vanity from her gran.

<sup>55</sup> When asked how her Mother reconciled her fashioning of beehives and hair dyeing with her religious convictions Jean said, "*Oh definitely, aha, but I mean within reason, she was always well dressed and things like that and she was never too sort of gaudy* [Laughter] *you know what I mean? And make-up wise and things like that you know, because it was a sin you know, everything like was a sin and she did go over the top a lot of the time which was bit wearing*" I interpreted this as an illustration of Stern's dictum that "*every would-be prohibitionist allows exceptions to his or her own rules and has a different notion of where to draw the line between a seemly degree of elegance and excess*" (Stern, 1997, p. 191).



rib, deep orange, like burnt orange colour and that kind of thing, I mean that, at the time - then - and like wee Chelsea boots and things that I must say, I was influenced in that way by maybe just seeing snippets from - in a magazine or on TV at that time.<sup>56</sup>

Working as a hairdresser from 1969 on, Sandy remembered Dusty's fame heralding an expansion in the styles of hair fashioning available to working-class women visiting the local salon, when only 'four styles' had previously been available:

Those hairstyles started getting copied that were like the Dusty hairstyles, when those started and when they wanted curls on top and like, when Dusty sort of had her curls on top, [...] then I do think its probably true that they did get a lot more pleasure, and they did start making choices, more I mean.

Notions of dissident femininity are linked in her memories of Dusty-style bouffanting and rebel hairdressing that could flourish because of the rudimentary equipment that this form of hair fashioning required:

AP: -we were talking about the value of Dusty's voice, what about the value of this sort of styling, you know, and fashioning that you were doing ?

Sandy: I think really when - I do remember that change now, what we called it – bouffant, and bloody hell, we all had bouffants, you know, and it was like, a change, and Marjory [salon manager] certainly couldn't do these hairstyles you know, and there was a woman who worked part-time called Pauline and she was sort of learning these hairstyles, but there was this rival woman who was just, I mean, she was a rebel and she didn't have a salon or anything but she just did people's hair and she did all the back-combing and she certainly did - and I mean her hairstyle was like a model of Dusty's for sure, and it was platinum and it was just this great big bouffant and these great big curls up on top and I always remember - she was called Pat this woman - and of course she didn't have any overheads or anything, so she used to do them in her front room and really I suppose it was a time when Marjory was losing a lot of customers because, now I think about it, women were choosing to have those, what were then more modern hairstyles you know, bleach their hair and everything, and they were going to this Pat's

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<sup>56</sup> Asked if she could tell me about one iconic moment when she felt she had achieved a state of glamour Jean described a further example of excessive and defiantly gaudy fashioning:

Jean: Probably, I think when I was roughly about 19, 20.

AP: Right, and tell me what that, what's the image in your mind when I ask that question?

Jean: I started buying a lot of, sort of, I remember having a trouser suit, it was plum velvet at the time and it was quite fitted and I bought this I remember in a wee boutique, they were boutiques [Laughter] in Burnside that specialised in certain things and I remember seeing this plum velvet trouser suit and going, and saving up for it and buying it and wearing that and feeling - and my hair had highlights and feeling, really you know, and wearing platforms if you can imagine.



front room for these bouffanty dos and it was like, in the end - Marjory - it was like, if you can't beat them, join them and Marjory had to ask this Pat woman if she would come and work for part of the week, I mean it was only like on Saturday mornings and Friday nights or something, to save her losing her customers you know, because they wanted the big hair basically.

AP: And do you think that class was an issue there? Do you think that - is it possible for certain hairstyles to be like, working-class hairstyles in your view or is this just you know - ?

Sandy: It's an interesting one isn't it? I think that I could think of a split - but then there were time differences in between me going to Miss Pilkington's [middle-class salon] but I do think with the working-class women there was more bleached hair.[...] Yeah, I do think so yeah, yeah, I really do. [...] It was like, you know, it was like permission to have Dusty hairdos and things. Probably the working-class women were more daring and I've never thought about that before. It was almost like, it was a bit like once the permission was there, then they went for it, whereas with the middle-class women it was more kind of chic than, you know, it was more chic and it might be like, a similar hairstyle but it might be like, big brown, bouncy curls or something that sort of fitted with, I don't know, something Vogueish.

Negotiating the complex, constantly shifting, abstract landscape of appropriate and inappropriate forms of fashioning, where acceptability was measured in degrees, appears to have also mobilised forms of dissent in young women.<sup>57</sup> For Sandy and other young working-class girls and women, becoming a fan of Dusty and Dusty fashioning led to the all too accessible pleasures of bouffanting, and re-fashioning in an unequivocal mark of identification:

Sandy: I remember just sort of all of a sudden it was sort of me and our Carol, [older sister] and we were really into Dusty by this time and we wanted the clothes and things and we couldn't have them, so we sort of tried to sew our own clothes up and that because - and the hair, I mean, it was like we couldn't have that hair but we could you know, back-comb our hair up and put sticky stuff on it and things you know.

Sandy remembered the image of Dusty being used provocatively in the domain of the shared domestic space:

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<sup>57</sup> Ann: *I was never allowed to dye my hair at school. My mum wouldn't let me. She said "Don't start that carry-on because you'll just have to keep doing it." and the terrible thing was, my Mum died and one of the worst things I did was, I dyed my hair, about a year later, which was very naughty and its been dyed ever since and, I always, always wanted to have different coloured hair [...] it was like tweezing eyebrows and she let me do that, but she said "That's one of the things you have to keep doing. Don't shave your legs" which I did immediately, as soon as she said that I shaved them the next day. [Laughter] So I wasn't allowed to dye my hair, but I was allowed semi-permanent colours and things like that.*



Sandy: That was part of the attraction, you know. I saw this such a powerful image, I mean, I couldn't have articulated that, I mean, this woman, there on the telly and she wasn't one of a four boy band. It was just her and this powerful image you know, of a woman in long dresses and this big eyes and hair and everything, and then me Dad saying you know "*She's not being on our telly*" and that was sort of, Yes! you know, it was just, Yes! I want some of that, you know. Me and my sister used to put this - and I don't know why we did it - but we put a poster of Dusty on the living-room wall over the table where we ate our meals and me Dad took it down eventually but I mean, we put it there, so - it was so provocative I mean, I wasn't aware of thinking, Oh, what will they say about that? in any way but we put the poster of Dusty there, you know, and I mean I can't imagine what he thought about it you know because it was such a bizarre thing you know it wasn't - we didn't have football things or anything like that that the lads would have had or anything like that in this living-room, it just wasn't the done thing, so how we come to think that we could - listen to me Dad saying "*We're not having her on our telly*" and we'd put a poster up on the living-room wall, I just can't imagine how we did it.<sup>58</sup>

### The sound of musical excess

Although arrested by her image, for Claire it was the emotional intensity of her performance that made encountering Dusty a profound experience:

Claire: I think I first remember Dusty as this - I think it would be *Top of The Pops*, a small, slight figure with fair hair and these very black eyes, a long black dress and very high heels singing, *Give me time* which I've always had a soft spot for, I think - and I just remember this extraordinary performance and I felt absolutely exhausted after it and I had to sit down. I was absolutely exhausted by the emotion I remember and then I remember seeing her as a much calmer figure, very sophisticated, singing *Son of a Preacher Man* in a very kind of - how surprised people were at that - with the sort of soul aspect of the song, which I found out later was really her first love.[...]

AP: Could I ask you, when you said you were exhausted, [...] with the emotion, was that your emotion or exhausted on behalf of Dusty because -?

Claire: No, I felt, I felt worn out by tremendous welling of emotions, because it was a tremendous outpouring, it was sort of a genuine emotion and perhaps it was a reflection that

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<sup>58</sup> Sandy asked me to turn the tape recorder back on at the end of our interview after recalling a further anecdote that reveals the fusion of racism with dissident femininity, sexuality and fashioning at work in critiques of Dusty: "*It leaked out that Dusty Springfield, you know she's having a relationship with a woman and so on and it was on the telly, and she [Sandy's current girlfriend] said her Dad said 'Well look at that woman' you know, they showed a picture of Dusty and a picture of Madeline Bell and her dad said 'Well that black woman's the ugliest woman in the world anyway' you know and it was as like we're not going to have any of this and you know, they are horrible and ugly dykes and all that kind of thing you know, and they couldn't say that about Dusty so, because she was everything, ever other woman was walking around with some sort of bit of her influence in her and so they said about it, about this black woman you know, yeah*".



there wasn't other singers around at that time, she seemed a very alone figure which I use - not lonely but alone [...]

AP: So when you were watching, this is a moving image, this is on the TV, and you have got the visuals in there as well - can you remember where you were? Were you at home or - ?

Claire: I think I would have been at home, yes, I think I would have been at home watching it in the holidays or something like that.

AP: And you don't remember anyone else - ?

Claire: I don't, I don't, I just remember being very affected by it and it was many years later I was extremely surprised that when I saw a film of Dusty that she was laughing all the time because to me the image was of someone very, very serious and very intense.

AP: So they are sad songs, they are emotionally - you talked about being emotionally wrought by this. Why did you want to listen to songs that were having that effect?

Claire: I couldn't pretend that I did at that time, I mean it was only later when I listened to Dusty a lot more, what I do remember was being struck with how powerful it was and how unusual. I suppose I was 16 and 15, it was very unusual for someone to put their heart into something like that.

For Jean too, Dusty's voice was:

Very distinctive, it was very, I don't know, it moved me a lot, her voice. I really feel that more than anyone else, thinking about singers at that time, I think it was very strong, very, you know, the way she came across, felt as though there was a very strong personality there, you know what I mean? I really did love her music.

### **The 'big weepies' and Dusty's 'mask'**

Claire and Jean interpreted the excessive fashioning adopted by Dusty as 'a mask'.<sup>59</sup>

Jean: I thought och, it doesn't matter what she wears, or what eye make-up, or what she does to her eyes because it was just Dusty because, of course, that was her cover-up, you know what I mean? That wasn't really her, that was just her, you know, performance and she was performing on stage, all these things were, just like a dress and façade sort of, just to cover the real Dusty,

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<sup>59</sup> This reading concurs with interpretations of cosmetic acts to be found in mainstream, Modernist, feminist texts and is pervasive in the literature on Dusty.



you know, but I do always remember Teresa when we talk about Dusty, or when I hear Dusty or whatever.<sup>60</sup>

Claire disparaged the ‘masquerade’, the gestures, the popular iconic image of Dusty and believed that this had been a reason for her work not achieving a level of serious consideration. She connected this to the notion of Dusty and her lyrics being ‘doormat’ – (her hair and eyes are symbolic of this), and that this doormat status/fashioning (and emoting) to excess lost her serious critical evaluation and feminist approbation. Although having testified to the impact of the emotionally arresting performances of Dusty that exhausted her as a young viewer, Claire, the only card-carrying Dusty fan amongst the participants, was keen to distance herself from both the ‘big weepies’ and nostalgia more generally:

Claire: One of the bitter ironies of Dusty’s life is that she didn’t succeed in killing herself. I believe if she had she would have become this huge celebrity and part of this nostalgic nonsense that I hate, so I think she lacked that, also there was this image of her as a doormat with all the hair and make-up and she wouldn’t have been seen at that time as a feminist icon, that’s just me speculating but I’m sure that’s the reason.

Claire’s confident articulation of her musical knowledge and taste included the nomination of good and bad, authentic blues and soul versus ‘big weepies’ in Dusty’s oeuvre:

Claire: I became a blues and soul fan and I was like, I mean I never liked The Beatles or anything, I liked something a bit heavier and a bit more soulful, but at that time as I say, I wasn’t really aware of Dusty’s great repertoire in soul, I mean all you heard were the big weepies, big weepies.

Claire’s persistent description of her interest in Dusty as being ‘definitely in two stages’ with ‘a huge gap’ in between produced the following constructions; of Claire as a girl in the 1960s, and from 1990 on as a grown-up; of life pre- and post university; before and after feminism and her unknowing

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<sup>60</sup> Jean made similar claims for the authentic Doris Day to be found under the mask of film representations: “Whereas maybe a lot of people see her as, oh, Miss Goody Two Shoes, because she’s been portrayed, you know, these big film companies, they take her on, and that’s what they wanted her to be, because of the way she looked, but really deep down she was a really strong person and a survivor, a fighter and that’s what I admired and I admired her music which she really sang when she sang the jazz, I mean that’s what I really like”. This admiration verging on self-narrativisation was also expressed in relation to Tina Turner, “Well, again it’s like this, a really dynamic, a really dynamic woman, survivor, fighter that always impressed me being a survivor of abuse from an early age then I just felt that strength coming and I got that strength from women like that”. The notion of cosmetic acts masking women’s intelligence and talents is a theme in mainstream and feminist texts and music journalism as I have discussed. For example, Dolly Parton is a “bountifully endowed blonde singer, whose wigs, spiky eyelashes and full tilt sequins camouflage a mind as sharp as a steel blade” (Glassman, 1978, p.261).



consumption and later connoisseurship of Dusty. She conceded that she had been moved by the 'big weepies', but as here, preferred to conceptualise Dusty's address as a generalised one in 'stage one' versus an intimate, personal, self-narrativised one in 'stage two':

AP: Right, ok, so you didn't have any women - young women friends who you would maybe dance to Dusty records with or perform in any sort of way or anything?

Claire: As I say, she was just part of - I suppose we listened to the big weepies and were moved by them, yes.

In this extract, to the soundtrack of Dusty, Claire relates a form of feminist epiphany, couched as consciousness-raising in the context of the university where Dusty and her powerful performance of emotional excess is transformed into a 'doormat' singing 'big weepies':

Claire: I mean I remember being at university, we'd listen and it would more be - looking back I think it was '70s and '80s, I thought, My god those lyrics were terribly doormat, and again, it was only later again that I discovered that she had sung things that were definitely [indecipherable] the big weepies and that came across, what I'd call doormat.

Claire <sup>61</sup> was also at pains to diminish the importance of her dabbling with even middle-class forms of fashioning and, to a greater extent, the Dustification of fans. Although eloquent in her descriptions of Dusty's musicality and its effects, it was clear that she did not share the colloquial or technical language of fashioning articulated by Sandy:

AP: I just wondered as well if you were aware of people fashioning - or did you see yourself fashioning yourself in any way influenced by music stars during the sixties?

Claire: Oh, I suppose probably in the late sixties, the hippy thing and that was one of my interests, but not Dusty, but I was aware she had a very big fashion following.

AP: Did you remember any friends at school or any other people that you knew attempting to fashion themselves in this way, or was it just a general -?

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<sup>61</sup> She defined her parents as "*professional middle class without much money*".



Claire: I think, you know, I have a vague memory of 17, 18-year-old girls with hairstyles like - and sort of eyes in the sixties.

In her accounts, Black male soul stars were homogenised by Ellen and read as excessive. Ellen also suggests that some sounds can only be listened to, if at all 'at a later stage':

Ellen: I do, yeah I remember all the *Hey girl don't bother me*, The Tamms and The ChiLites and all these - well to me they all melded into one because they all had that very sound, very sort of Motown sound and they were all men in the shiny suits dancing.

Adele: And how would you, if I was to ask you to sort of try and describe that sound, because it is a distinctive one, what type of words would you use to describe -?

Ellen: Well, a kind of a wall of sound, that's the standard way of describing it isn't it? I think, see, when it was all these lounge-lizardy sort of people, to me it was a kind of slinky sound, which I was not - it was not really what I was into. When you are older I think you can listen to it, but I never liked Barry White and he's back again now and I still can't, you know, I just - just - I just can't bear that very kind of intimate you know, all that, eeeugh, nah - [indecipherable] <sup>62</sup>

Attending college to study photography in the 1970s, Ellen found a peer group whose style and tastes reflected her own knowledge of serious film and music and whose clothing conformed to a uniform of cool, epitomised by David Bailey.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, for Ellen and Claire it is feminine excess

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<sup>62</sup> Ellen grew up in a working-class family in the 1960s but absorbed at an early stage notions of serious/lightweight musical genres from her brother who ran an independent record shop: "Yes, I remember things like *Roxy Music*, I just loved that but thinking about it, it was - the taste I was getting was from an older brother [...] It was filtering out ". Although her musical taste was eclectic and broader than mainstream, she noted that her taste was undermined, first by her husband who would take off her records and replace them with his own and now by her young son who does the same: "I mean, it didn't bother me because I always thought, ok, well music is - was his [her ex-husband's] hobby more than it was mine and - but when Robbie does it I kind of think - well he never just does it, he'll always be, 'Oh Mummy can I listen to-' and changes it".

Acknowledging her ex-husband's 'superior' listening, Ellen noted "He was into everything, absolutely everything, quite a farce, and again, he wouldn't have taken - have taken mine off and put his on, but he would maybe leave it until the track was finished and then - 'I think I'll put on...' obviously his choice and it would be his choice rather than mine but I kind of let that go in the sense that he was a music fan and I wasn't, I mean, what's a down grade from a fan - an appreciator maybe more than- " Now something of a connoisseur, she regarded performances of musical excess such as that by Julie Andrews in the *Sound of Music* as marking Andrews as a "blumming sap - I wanted to strangle her". She had preferred to construct her taste around "all that kind of protesty songs" performed by stars such as Joan Baez and later Emmylou Harris on whom she had modelled her taste in fashioning. Of all the female soul stars Ellen could only recall Diana Ross and the Supremes. Reminded by me of Tina Turner who in her early career crossed into a rock/serious music category found her style excessive "She was far too, eeuh, she was far too kind of over the top for me, you know... "

<sup>63</sup> She enjoyed wearing her frayed jeans and afghan coat that both required labour intensive treatment to appear casual and her hair long or feather cut. She had it dyed, but to look natural. College - "was like going home and there were lots of other people like me too which was good, [...] and even although we were cooler than cool, the photography students they -we actually laughed about them because they would come in quite normal, then after about three weeks of photography they would gradually adopt a sort of David Bailey look [Laughter] we were so uppity and go [points] 'photography student' you know, you could tell". Rather disingenuously, Jean Shrimpton, a contemporary of Dusty's and Bailey's muse claimed that her 'scruffy' 'tousled' and 'mongrel' look made fashion 'more accessible' to all (Shepherd, 2002). This runs counter to my own memories of consuming fashion images of Shrimpton who represented an absolute (middle-class) ideal, in part because her look did not appear constructed or excessively fashioned. This was a look, like Bardot's as Elizabeth points out, that was at odds with feminine



rather than the adoption of a Modernist style that is symbolic of a lack of free will, a masquerade.

Claire emphasised what she regarded as a problematic disjuncture between the authenticity of Dusty's vocal accomplishments and the distraction of her fashioning:

Claire: I think the appearance of her, people took that at face value because it was really just a big cover and you have to know Dusty's work a bit to appreciate that that was taken at face value and the big weepies were taken at face value so that, you know, when you - I know you were coming on to ask me about this but all I really knew until 1990 was the big weepies and the *Preacher man* so I think for a lot of people they didn't realise the music, the depth of the music, particularly even 10 years later came along, they didn't – she'd gone, they didn't know about that and the old clips they would see would be *You don't have to say you love me*, it was that image thing.

AP: And could you describe exactly what you mean by cover? I mean, I know that quite a few people have given accounts that have described it in a similar way, this fashioning thing, but what do you take that to mean?

Claire: Do you mean what she was wearing and how she looked?

AP: Yes, but when you use the word cover, you're saying it's a cover for - ?

Claire: Well, I think that it's not original, but a lot of people who knew her better would say that this was to cover up her insecurities, to be somebody else, somebody different when once she had all this on, that she would put on even with friends, it was almost somebody else, it - I don't think it was exactly someone else, I think it was still her but I certainly mean that you can't look at her appearance and make deductions from this about the sort of music she sang or the person that she was from that, it's to my mind – it's very annoying when people make that deduction because it's very superficial.

Dusty's expressive hand gestures are an iconic aspect of her performances and have been routinely used in camp or mocking ways but Sandy, Gabrielle and others mimicked these to convey Dusty's dramatic, ineffable excesses:

Gabrielle: And I used to like the way she presented herself, you know, held herself, you know, her arms. [ gestures like Dusty ]

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excess. The Shrimpton /Bailey clique included Bailey's best friend Mick Jagger who dated Shrimpton's sister and Marianne Faithfull (who did a *Vogue* spread) the epitome of what Gered Mankovitz dubbed the 'natural but erotic' look. Loog Oldman has claimed that "*In Bailey you had the visual image of what you (as Stones manager) were trying to do aurally*" (ibid.).



AP: So you are doing a sort of gesture there with your arms, a very 'Dusty' gesture.

Gabrielle: Yes, I really liked her. I really liked her.<sup>64</sup>

Dusty is linked in Gabrielle's account with what Frith has dubbed 'the extravagance of emotion' (Frith, 1991, p162) performed by Shirley Bassey, an exponent *sans pareil* of 'big weepies':

AP: And do you remember - because around that time there was quite a lot of black soul singers as well, do you remember the impact of that on the radio and the telly? Do you remember when the Motown music started up, or any other stars or singers?

Gabrielle: Shirley Bassey was one, but she wasn't like Motown was she?

AP: No, but did you -

Gabrielle: But oh, I adored her yes, I thought she was fantastic, yes.

AP: What did you particularly like about Shirley?

Gabrielle: I liked the way she used to sing, the way she used to wave her arms about, the way she dressed and lovely long slinky dresses and I thought she had a beautiful face [...] Yes she did and her eyes, her eyes sort of lit up and sparkled but in those days it was all in black in white, the telly at the time, we didn't have a coloured one.

Claire read this aspect of Dusty's performance as reiterating the artificial versus natural, good and bad aspects of her work:

Claire: The hand movements and so on are a bit of a distraction to me, again it's something that I think people take up, and Lulu has subsequently said that she had lines written on them, hilarious and wonderful to think, you know, that's very Dusty, but I much prefer to see her later on with what seem much more genuine movements in the '70s, '80s and '90s you see much more what seems to me, I don't know what the word would be, movement that tied in with what she was -

AP: Expressing?

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<sup>64</sup> Marilyn Nance has stated, "It seems to me that soul is not so much in the heart or the mind, but in the hands. The gestures. Maybe soul is a language of power that we speak with our hands" (Nance, 1998, p. 159).



Claire: More natural, much more natural, and I think it was to do with her nerves as well as having something written on her arms, so again I would see that as a bit of a distraction.

Claire prefers Lulu's rather implausible testimony over acknowledging a further form of unnecessary gestural excess. Notwithstanding Claire's annoyance at her notorious fashioning, she saw Dusty as a radical performer:

I don't think people realised at the time that Dusty actually said at the time to a microphone that she had changed *Twenty-four hours from Tulsa* to be a hooker and I had this –I was completely taken aback, along with everyone else that what she did that she - I thought this was a very interesting interpretation indeed. *Breakfast in Bed* you see has always come across to me as somebody having an illicit affair and that's what I recognised it as, very vividly, but I didn't recognise the sexuality aspect of that song,

Claire's ambivalence about Dusty's emotive performances is raised again in her account of rediscovering Dusty in 1990. Her interest was reactivated by hearing tracks from *The silver collection*, notably 'Colouring Book'. This is one of the most mannered of Dusty's slow numbers, Claire remembers it as re-kindling of her interest in Dusty but somewhat rationalises this by emphasising Dusty's musical eclecticism:

Claire: For the first time ever I listened to a style that I hadn't listened to before, which she sang so well and so movingly, and I then, subsequently, would listen to her singing jazz and I would listen to her singing country and, you know, I thought actually I - one of the things I am grateful to her for is that, actually opening my eyes to all kinds of music I hadn't heard before, but again it was - at the root it would have been the emotion which she was expressing, not in a sort of soppy way, but conveying very powerfully in a song like that, which I would never normally have listened to, I can't really say more than that.

Both Sandy and Claire regarded Dusty as a positive, disruptive feminist influence, ahead of her times; Claire, on the basis of her maverick musical interpretations, and Sandy as a model of dissident femininity for working-class women like herself:

Sandy: - Oh yeah, I mean I don't see how that image of Dusty could have been described as anything other than an image of feminism, if - you know, if it was - if that image was sort of



copied by working -class women, I just don't see how it could have been anything other than feminist, you know, to me - do you know what I mean?

### **Dusty and dissident rites of passage**

Dusty was the object of an oddly furtive adolescent interest. Her image, like her hair, was brittle... Her songs hinted at unspoken, desperate truths about sexuality that weren't there for discussion by little boys (Frith, 1998)

Memories of Dusty were frequently linked by participants with moments of dissidence and indulgence in proscribed, cosmetic acts.<sup>65</sup> For Sandy, the process of experimentation with excessive fashioning was modelled on stars like Kathy Kirby and Dusty, facilitated by her aunt. A process that required courage, and a period of private practice before public exposure. She noted that as well as being cheap to construct, bouffanting allowed the flexibility to modulate its impact:

Sandy: I remember sort of having my hair cut in quite a bouffanty thing [...] but it was one that could either be flat or, you know, if you really backcombed it up and then put the hairspray on - but really we didn't have - and I think I can say this about our Carol as well, we didn't have the courage to do that outside, you know, it was much later on and it was a very scaled down version what we did to, you know, go out and you know, go out with boys and girls and that it was a much sort of softened version of it.

This experimentation is often remembered as collective:

Sandy: We used to sort of do this mimicking thing, leave the window in the living room open to play records so that the noise would come through, you know, and just sort of sing along with it, ohh and we loved it, and we used to roll our skirts up and you know and put - I mean we'd - I mean we were quite late really when I think about it - er having bras, like we used to take my Mum's bras and put socks in and things like that, you know, but like lipstick, I mean lipstick was a really big part of it you know that was really - putting lipstick on, you know over the edge of your lips, putting the Vaseline on to make it shiny-

AP: - [...] are just girls involved in those at that time?

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<sup>65</sup> On hearing Dusty, Jean's mother is remembered as rehearsing the cliché, "*Oh, oh god, I don't know, young 'uns, nowadays*". Whereas Claire's aunt, like Claire herself, was critical of Dusty's appearance. Claire's family critiqued the inappropriate fashionings of both male and female stars: "*Oh well my aunt would say, 'Oh, that dreadful looking woman' you know, but I think - rather like my mother said, 'Oh Mick Jagger, that dreadful man, his lips are too thick' I don't suppose it was more than that. There were so many other people who were more annoying to parents.*"



Sandy: Oh they were only girls yeah, definitely, I'd never thought of that -

Some salons in this period offered a virtually woman-only space where both the mysteries of sexuality were discussed and fantasies could be played out. Ettie enjoyed impromptu performances in the salon with other salon workers, modelling themselves on (Black) British and American stars:

Ettie: You were modelling yourself on Diana Ross, Shirley Bassey I mean, music influenced - music played in the salon I worked in all the time as well [...] that was your entertainment you see, but when it was quiet in the salon we used to all sing and do concerts and things.[...] Oh yeah, somebody would be "*Right, it's your turn Jane. You get up*" and she'd sing and then I'd get up and I'd be [sings in an excellent impersonation of Shirley Bassey *I will love you, as I've loved you...*] you know, Shirley Bassey, and I loved drama too [...] She was an actress. I just thought she was class, she was - Diana Ross was class as well. There's so many I'd fill up the whole tape because - Elvis, amazing. There was a dignity about them then, there's no dignity now, I mean, I look at the music and it's almost pornographic.<sup>66</sup>

Having and making clothes reminiscent of those worn by female stars like Dusty and Bassey were connected in Sandy's memories with first considering herself a woman:

Sandy: It was also a sensual kind of thing because I've never thought of it before, but I think putting these tight things on you know, and sort of, you know [...] I think that I sort first - of realising about your body you know, and having curves and things even though we were certainly - only little, but being aware that having tight clothes on, it was gorgeous, I mean that feeling, I can remember that feeling was so gorgeous you know, being something, having something you know, having something womanly, but also being aware of sexualness, of sexuality you know, and womanliness and stuff, yeah. [Her aunt] bought me and Carol these outfits and we were only little, you know, and it was like, it was incredible because it was just like the first time of realising that little girls could have clothes you know, we were, we were quite young then, I mean it might be the wrong sort of time thing you know, because you were talking about when I was 16 or so because we were only younger and it was like realising that, you know you could have something like your Mum wore or something, but my Mum wasn't fashionable but my Aunty certainly was but we loved - and we wore these - <sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Pam implied that deriving inspiration from popular music performances was as an activity only permissible to young people: "*I think when you are younger you always try a wee bit don't you?* [Laughter] *And your writing your ain songs and that, and when you get older and you look back and it just looks stupid and at the time you're really enjoying it*".

<sup>67</sup> The dramatic transition from New Look inspired garments and the shirtdress and tightly fashioned tube dresses of the 1960s necessarily offered new haptic sensations for some women of the fashioned body. Sandy was involved as were many girls in this period in the process of re-fashioning garments from full to close fitting: "*Oh well, we did this, what we were doing was, was had - at the time, I mean, I'm going back you know certainly prior to when I was 16, [...] - the dresses then were generally - they were cotton and they came to the waist, but they were a bit flared but then all of a sudden these flared dresses and pleated bottom halves went out so we used to - the most ambitious thing we did was to take - unpick the dress from there and iron the pleats out and sew them down in a straight line you know, but I mean that was the most ambitious - but generally speaking we*



In contrast, the performances of popular female stars allowed the adolescent Ellen the opportunity to make concrete her antipathy to low musical forms and performances, distinguishing herself from her working-class peers. According to her developing tastes, influenced by her aficionado brother, performers associated with specific forms of popular TV, as in the case of Lulu, meant for Ellen that they were likely to be ‘crap’:<sup>68</sup>

Ellen: I remember Lulu doing - because obviously Lulu, she was relevant to Glaswegians because she was, she was a Glaswegian, but to most people later, she – it’s that Scottish thing of going “*Oh who does she think she is?*” you know “*that uppity madam*” and she’s lost it, but I always thought she was crap. I don’t think she is now actually, I think she - she - her potential was completely lost if she was - now she would have gone in a completely different direction.

AP: So why do you think, why did you think ‘crap’ at the time? Have you got any memories of thinking -?

Ellen: Because it was all kind of like variety show stuff, it was kind of stuff that your parents would like, mines didn’t, but I’m sure it was - she was young and yet she was catering to, to that kind of Val Doonican set which was what you thought was all she could do and it’s not fair because she has a huge potential.<sup>69</sup>

### The queering of Dusty

Expressing to excess has, in recent years, in both theory and increasingly in popular culture, come to be something of a gay male prerogative, a ubiquitous flag of ironic, post-feminist queerness. Dusty has figured in queer literature and culture as both an inauthentic drag queen and medium for gay male identification. This interpretation is even used by Dusty’s biographer, the feminist and former *Spare Rib* music writer, Lucy O’Brien: “*With the invention of Dusty Springfield she [Mary O’Brien, adopted] a look modelled on drag queens, an over the top, larger than life, parody of stereotypical femininity*” (O’Brien, 1999, p. 179).<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the broader musical and performative pleasures of, and

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*just took them in and made them tighter we just sewed - we turned them inside out and we sewed them right in so that they were tight you know, so they were tight dresses”.*

<sup>68</sup> In this extract Ellen comes close to undermining (as did her brother) her own taste for *Top of the pops*.

<sup>69</sup> Ellen defines her taste as in two stages; youthful disdain for the old-fashioned televised Lulu, and, later, a connoisseur’s acknowledgement of song-writing potential, beneath the ‘mask’. She had noted how TV programming from the 1960s and 1970s determined serious/lightweight, male/female categorisations: “*Oh yes, we were into Top of the Pops and John [brother] was into the Old Grey Whistle Test but that was just [indecipherable] it’s funny that I don’t know if its a male, female thing but that was meant to be serious whereas mine was seen as like Top of the pops.*” Dusty can be said to have disrupted to a degree such clear cut demarcations, duetting with Jimi Hendrix on Dusty, and in the eclecticism of her oeuvre.

<sup>70</sup> According to critic Shaar Murray “*She was as close to being a drag queen as you can get if you are a biological women*”



consumption by female fans of femininity are often relegated in crudely reductive interpretations of Dusty and stars such as Bassey or Parton to forms of femininity that are fixed in gay male culture.<sup>71</sup> The imperative for Dusty to be above all, a figure for gay male identification is asserted by O'Brien, despite Dusty's stated lack of identification with 'tragic' gay male icons Garland and Piaf.<sup>72</sup> The accounts of research participants suggest that more complex readings, ones that include identifications on a range of registers by women might be considered and where her 'badness' at femininity are not raised. As a fan club stalwart, Claire's observations on differences in gender and sexuality in the consumption of Dusty are illuminating. Gay men are cast as tending to homogenise the pantheon of tragic heroines whereas Dusty offers a unique model for lesbians:

Claire: Intermittently, I went through a phase in the 90s when I was really, you know, gobbling up everything in sight, I spent a lot of time communicating with other fans, mostly men as it turns out, but it's very time consuming and they tended to write extremely long letters that took longer to write than, you know, to read and to write a reply and you do find that different people appreciate different aspects of her and a lot of gay men - icons - identify with sort of the construction they made of those tragic heroines and I also - I'm generalising on what people have said, but they tended to like sort of the music that I didn't like, what I call soppy music,

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(ibid.).

Dusty's iconic look has been attributed to a range of disparate sources including: Juliette Greco and the heavy eye-liner look seen by Dusty in Paris (and French *Vogue*), Monica Vitti, Hollywood glamour, Motown and Black women soul stars and the RSG! and Mod milieu of London in the early 1960s. Late in her career after the mythologised rescue by the Pet Shop Boys, Dusty increasingly queered her own history (although remained enigmatic to the last about her own sexuality) and, by 1985 in an interview with *Gay Times* claimed "*I learned most of my tricks from drag queens... what kind of mascara lasts longest, how to apply eye shadow - very serious decisions*" (Dusty in Kirk, 1999, p. 51). I read this as Dusty's typically mischievous (and somewhat desperate?) courting of the gay audience. Kane relinquishes Dusty's autonomy and agency to gay male authorship: "*The Pet Shop Boys are the undisputed kings/queens of camp rehabilitation; their electro-pop jobs on Dusty Springfield and Liza Minnelli turned two show biz disaster areas into brittle monuments of twentieth century glamour; if they sounded awkward and cramped by their digital surroundings maybe that was partly the point - a whiff of pathos, something excessive to snigger about?*" (Kane, 1994, p. 13).

<sup>71</sup> Parton has begun to be critically appraised from standpoints other than a feminist antipathy to her modelling of feminine-excess or a gay male/queer appropriation. For example, Melissa Jane Hardie has interrogated the colonial ideology of Country Music and Parton's varied simulations of the 'country way of life'. The theme of transformation (e.g., in Parton's use of fetishised prosthetics) is identified by Hardie as critical to her practice in the context of the 1970s popular cultural developments, according to Hardie, Ivana Trump and *Dallas* changed the valance of big hair from low to high class, '*from Jacqueline Suzanne to Onassis*' (Hardie quoted in Patrick, 1997, p. 33).

O'Brien has claimed "*Dusty gained gay fans early in her career because of her musical style and her love of Motown. Gay men have always been at the forefront of dance music, whether as soul consumers or as performers, and Dusty was seen as a bridging-point in terms of her musical choices*" (ibid. p. 182). Notwithstanding the indisputable fact of soul being enjoyed and performed by many gay men, a survey of the British gay liberation press finds this claim, that soul has been the principle musical form of interest to gay men, to be largely unsubstantiated.

<sup>72</sup> "*With her return to the pop world in the late seventies, Dusty found that her most loyal fans were among the gay community. To them she was a showbiz heroine, a living legend in the mould of a Garland or a Piaf. In 1964, Dusty had said, with prophetic irony, 'I'm not a legendary type. You have to be a tragic figure to become a legend - like Garland and Edith Piaf, I don't have that quality. I don't particularly want it - not if you have to slash your wrists to get it.' However with her husky vulnerability and dramatic private life she embodied the camp sensibility in pop. Her career had become like an operatic plot, scaling extreme highs and lows, and the pain of misfit isolation with which many gays could identify*" (ibid. p. 157).

In a revealing observation on Dusty's appeal for gay men, Kirk suggests that the "*fashioning and performing to excess*" was a form of tragi-comic 'bad taste', and that her emotional vocal address was, baldly, a 'fix' for gay men "*Dusty always stood out. She had terrible taste in clothes, she didn't fit in with the glam things sixties girls were supposed to, and she modelled herself on drag queens*" (Kirk cited in O'Brien, p. 181). In his hagiographic biography Kirk refers to Dusty's "*vast legion of devoted (and primarily gay) superfans*" (Kirk, 1999, p. 44). Cilla and Lulu now solicit their own consumption as camp. For example, although not known for her views on lesbian and gay politics, Lulu headed the Stonewall's Equality Show bill in 2001.



whereas I was into, as I say, blues and soul, so I couldn't always just by - I couldn't always necessarily identify the same emotions, yes.

AP: So you are, if we are generalising a little bit there, are there associations that we could talk about generally for the women that you know that like her music? How does that differ from this general feeling that you get from maybe queer appreciation of Dusty? What is the difference between –

Claire: I think that the woman I know that - do roughly what I do, they have the same emotional identification, but also lesbian women, I am straight, but I've got a large number of lesbian friends and I think they have a more realistic view than gay men, a perfectly realistic view of Dusty, as another lesbian woman they don't invent things about her, but I do think that they feel - you'd have to ask them, but it seems to me that although she was, you know, in some ways very open about her life and in other ways quite cagey, that they do appreciate, they do appreciate what she stood for and you'd really have to ask them, but I think they'd agree that she did stand up, at least to a large degree.

In her memorialising of Dusty in the 'lesbian lifestyle' magazine *Diva*, shortly after Dusty's death, the mythologised connection between Dusty and gay men/drag queens is again rehearsed by O'Brien "*a host of gay fans appreciated that she had modelled herself on drag queens*" (O'Brien, 1999a, p. 51). In these typical accounts, forms of lesbian identification are strangely subordinated, supplanted in theory and popular criticism by a focus on Dusty as a drag queen with an ironic gay male following.<sup>73</sup>

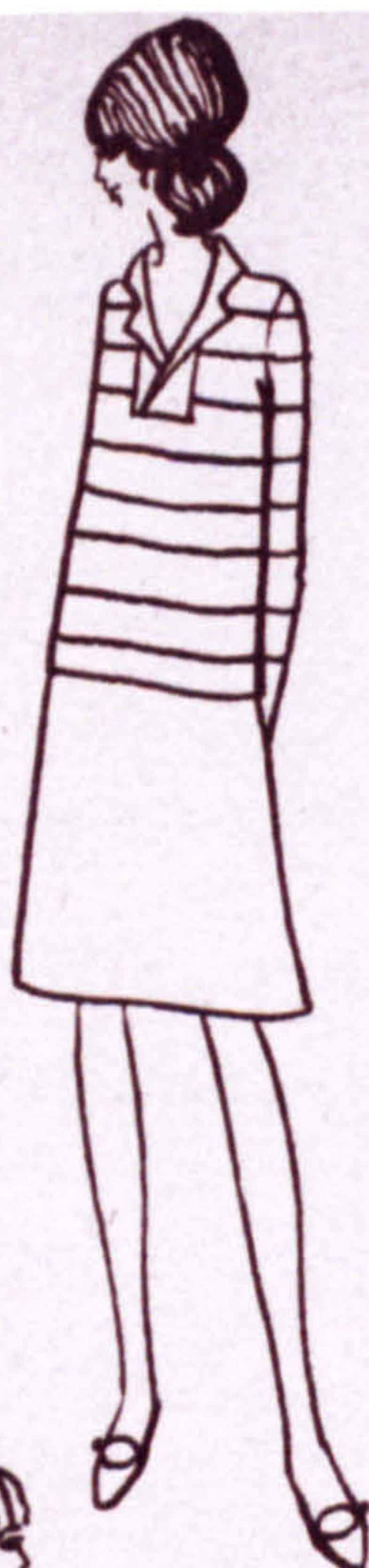
### Modernism, rock ideology and feminine excess

Although Dusty's professional achievements have been recognised to a degree in contemporary music journalism (for example, George-Warren, 1997) her feminine excess has arguably been the most significant factor, inextricably linked as it is with both gender and sexuality, in undermining her musical status. This disdain has marginalised her from both mainstream and feminist recognition on much the same basis. The risks posed by feminine excess for female stars in the developing Modernist context is implied in O'Brien's statement "*Despite her bouffant hairdo and drag artists mascara,*

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<sup>73</sup> Despite an editorial tendency to attribute Dusty's fan base to gay men, *Diva* records by default lesbian fans enduring interest in the star who was claimed by lesbian communities since the 1960s. In the December 2002 issue the events guide advertises the Manchester lesbian club 'Dusty's' and Emma Wilkinson, the Dusty soundalike winner of TV's *Stars in your eyes*, is flagged as appearing at the London lesbian club, 100% Babe (*Diva*, December, 2002, p. 72).

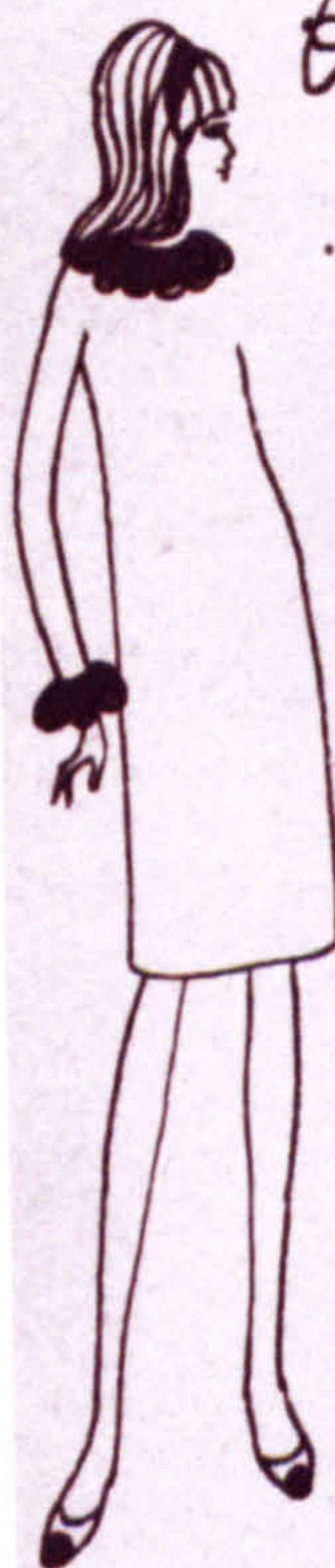




Looking like yourself is a much better idea.



... A little goes a long way—specially when it's frilly.



A very little is good fashion value.

Too much glitter makes you look like a Christmas tree.



water will double the life of your undies. How frequent is frequent? Ideally bra's and girdles, like pants and stockings, should be washed every day.

### **GOLDEN RULE NO. 3**

Be yourself. So you're not a square. So you think all adults are strictly not with it. So the beatnik bug has bitten you and you want to express yourself.

Fine. But make sure that in your attempt to be an individualist you haven't left one regimented group to join another.

There are an awful lot of young girls going around today who have reacted violently against conforming—only to find they are now conforming to another set of laid-down rules just as stifling.

Inevitably they wear black stockings, preferably with a ladder or two, black boots, preferably unpolished, black trows, preferably a bit dusty looking, handknit sweaters, preferably a bit tatty. Like sausages out of a machine they conform more rigidly than those they despise for being "square." Beware the herd instinct. Be yourself. It's nicer.

### **GOLDEN RULE NO. 4**

A new fashion is introduced. It's pretty. It catches on. It goes too far. And so do you.

Classic example: the fad for frills. One layer of frills is pretty; two layers of frills are festive; three layers of frills are a bit much; four layers of frills, and you'll look like a lamb chop or a Christmas cracker!

Beware the fashion manufacturers who flood the shops with fashion fads aimed at the young and over-enthusiastic. At any age after the cradle there isn't a more valuable watchword than simplicity. A well-dressed girl knows this as instinctively as she knows her own name.



*Springfield was as much part of the early mod scene, appearing regularly on the pioneering pop programme Ready Steady Go!*" (O'Brien cited in Evans, 1995).<sup>74</sup>

Despite her popularity, Dusty at an early stage in her career, made unprecedented public identifications with both anti-racist and lesbian positions but her work has been disregarded, or at least only constructed as a guilty pleasure, by lesbian feminism. Dusty's paradoxically appealing and repulsive performance, voice and fashioning of femininity is illuminated by further consideration of the historical context of a contemporary construction of British and American, Modernist and masculine rock. The construction of a rock ideology and the masculine prerogative to perform it is the overwhelming dynamic in popular musical history that spans Dusty's pop career.<sup>75</sup> Unlike many rock stars fan memories whether invented or not, few fans of soul and pop remember the live performance of stars, but the authenticity of rock performers was increasingly linked in this period with the intensification of marketing that placed a premium on live gigs and tours.

### Un/natural women

For Dusty's female fans from the early 1960s, the proscriptive advice in a range of girl and women focused texts, which increasingly presented as natural, ideal bourgeois forms of femininity of barefoot Sandie Shaw, Jean Shrimpton and Marianne Faithfull was at odds with Dusty's performance of femininity.<sup>76</sup> The discourses of advice for presented in girls' literature and women's magazines from

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<sup>74</sup> Elvis Costello makes a similar point after crediting Dusty as having "one of the greatest voices in pop music...I don't think she ever got credit for that because people concentrate on the icon aspect of her you know the hair the eye lashes and the hand gestures" (Pomphrey, 1994). Towards the end of her career Dusty's hair fashioning appears to have been significant in obstructing her efforts to create soul music. Valentine and Wickham suggest that her fashioning, by the mid 1970s was read as being more appropriate to female country singers: "Audiences in Nashville were loyal to these women no matter if they put weight on and wore outrageous clothes. All that counted to them was the authenticity of the experience usually expressed in bruised voices. For her old American manager Barry Krost, who considered Dusty's hair to be 'a lethal weapon', country music had been the obvious answer to Dusty's lack of direction, but when he suggested it to her in Los Angeles she was still desperate to rekindle her past success as a white soul singer and couldn't see how she could turn that around" (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 249). In contrast, the iconographic stylings of masculinity from the 1950s to the 1970s by Dusty's male counterparts have had an enduring gravitas, evident in the fashioning of male stars in the Brit Pop revival e.g. Oasis, Blur, and Weller.

<sup>75</sup> Dusty's association with Motown can also be seen to have ultimately diminished her musical credibility. Ironically, Motown's trailblazing success as a Black company breaking into white markets, placed them on the margins of critical consideration and made them white. The author of volumes on soul music, Guralnick writes "Perhaps I simply rejected Motown out of ideological considerations, for the very reason that it was so much more popular, so much more socially acceptable, so much more white". (Guralnick, 1999, p. 250). Stax, Goldwax, Fame and other American, mainly white-owned labels that were successful in Britain in the mid 1960s would retain their kudos of authenticity and Blackness due to their being relatively less popular. Motown aficionados like Brian Ward have criticised this tendency: "Even the usually sensible Arnold Shaw fell headlong into this trap (in *The World of Soul*, 1970) describing Motown in terms which made it sound like a pale imitation of something blacker, something more real, more substantial, lurking in the southlands. Motown songs, Shaw claimed, 'are light and fluffy. It is hardly soul food, but rather a dish for which white listeners have acquired a taste'" Ward goes on to note "Motown's unparalleled popularity among black consumers suggests that the black masses shared little of the critics sense of fakery and fraud" (Abbott, 200, p. 46).

<sup>76</sup> As the advice metered out in *Helen Shapiro's new book for girls*, 1963 (opposite) or the quiz in *Sixteen* annual (below) implies Question 4:

Your boyfriend comments crushingly on your eye make-up. What do you do?

(a) Reply that you don't think much of his choice of ties. [surely the answer Dusty would recommend!]

(b) Ask him what he likes girls to wear in general. [reader M had ticked this]

(c) Give up wearing cosmetics.

(d) Listen calmly and in future wear less make-up. [reader L had ticked this, which was the 'right' answer] (*Sixteen*, 1967, p. 77).

Biographers Valentine and Wickham have written "Yet while Dusty's contemporaries looked only at *Vogue* models like Twiggy. Jean Shrimpton, Jill Kennington and some of their own peer group for inspiration, Dusty was either in the cinema or devouring film magazines with their full page pictures of alluring film stars" (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 42).



absolutely right at the moment for anyone who's young. High heels, which can make young immature legs look like Minnie Mouse are OUT. So are wrinkle-picking, spiky toes.

The best-shod feet around at the moment are wearing medium heels with gently rounded toes. The witches points that threw all the foot-care specialists into a frenzy about the future health of our tootsies have died the fashion death, and today you can't do better than to wear the young-looking shoes that used to be called childish and are now called chic.

### **GOLDEN RULE NO. 10**

How much make-up should a young girl use? A little in the right place at the right time. And it's difficult to be more definite than that.

By day a little foundation, plus a little powder if you like it, plus a little lipstick is still the best basic plan of all. But nowadays the shiny look with no powder and the natural look with no lipstick is more likely to be the look you like.

Possible pitfall: too much eye make-up. Black-ringed eyes with spiky lashes and beetle brows turn a pretty face into a joke. At 14 as at 40 make-up should be applied with a fairy-light touch and not a trowel. And however much make-up you use by night—you need only half as much by day. Leave the ultra-rich cleansing creams, conditioning creams and moisturising creams to your elders whose skin needs aiding and abetting more than yours does.



Young legs  
young-look  
shoes.



Make-up needs  
a light hand.

11. 'Top ten golden rules of dress' in *Helen Shapiro's New Book for Girls*, 1963, p 41.



Dusty rehearsing for *Ready, steady, go!* in 1964, reproduced in *Dusty*, 1999, Lucy O'Brien, unpaginated.



this period reveals this divergence between models of so-called natural femininity and those performed by Dusty.

Ironically, such tastes, for understated, unadorned forms of femininity are somewhat unproblematically incorporated and re-stated in the early Second-Wave of feminism. As I will go on to argue, such proscriptions failed to account for the array of femininities constructed by women from a range of texts in diverse cultural, social and historical contexts in this period Dusty described her own pleasures in and taste for the forms of excessive, Hollywood femininity experienced in marathon visits with her mother to the cinema.

It [Hollywood movies] was sheer glamour and that really gaudy Technicolor, the Betty Grable red lips look, the slash of scarlet - it was absolutely marvellous. It was just the whole glitz of it, it was everything that I wanted to be and would never be. I wanted to be in there with them doing it, it was just sheer trashy glamour - I knew even when I was four I wanted trashy glamour, its great (Dusty interviewed by Brian Lineham, 1982).<sup>77</sup>

### Dissident femininity

Research participants' accounts of taking pleasure in fashioning or performing dissident forms of femininity including the model presented by Early Mod Dusty, contradict a passive process of self-objectification, of simply fashioning in anticipation of the male gaze.<sup>78</sup> Rather than reproducing an image that conformed with social and cultural expectations of women to be attractive to men, Dusty described her aim in self-fashioning at this point, to "*try to be as unsexy as possible*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 80) and of cultivating "*an over the top parody of stereotyped femininity that didn't pose a threat*" (Scotland on Sunday, 15 February, 1998, p. 15) Participants recorded being absorbed by Dusty's address, by her fashioning, gestures, voice and lyrics. Singer Billie Davies, who often shared a dressing room with Dusty on *Ready Steady Go!* suggests she Dusty was engaged in an active dialogue or discourse of cosmetic acts that both transgressed acceptable limits of femininity and was specifically

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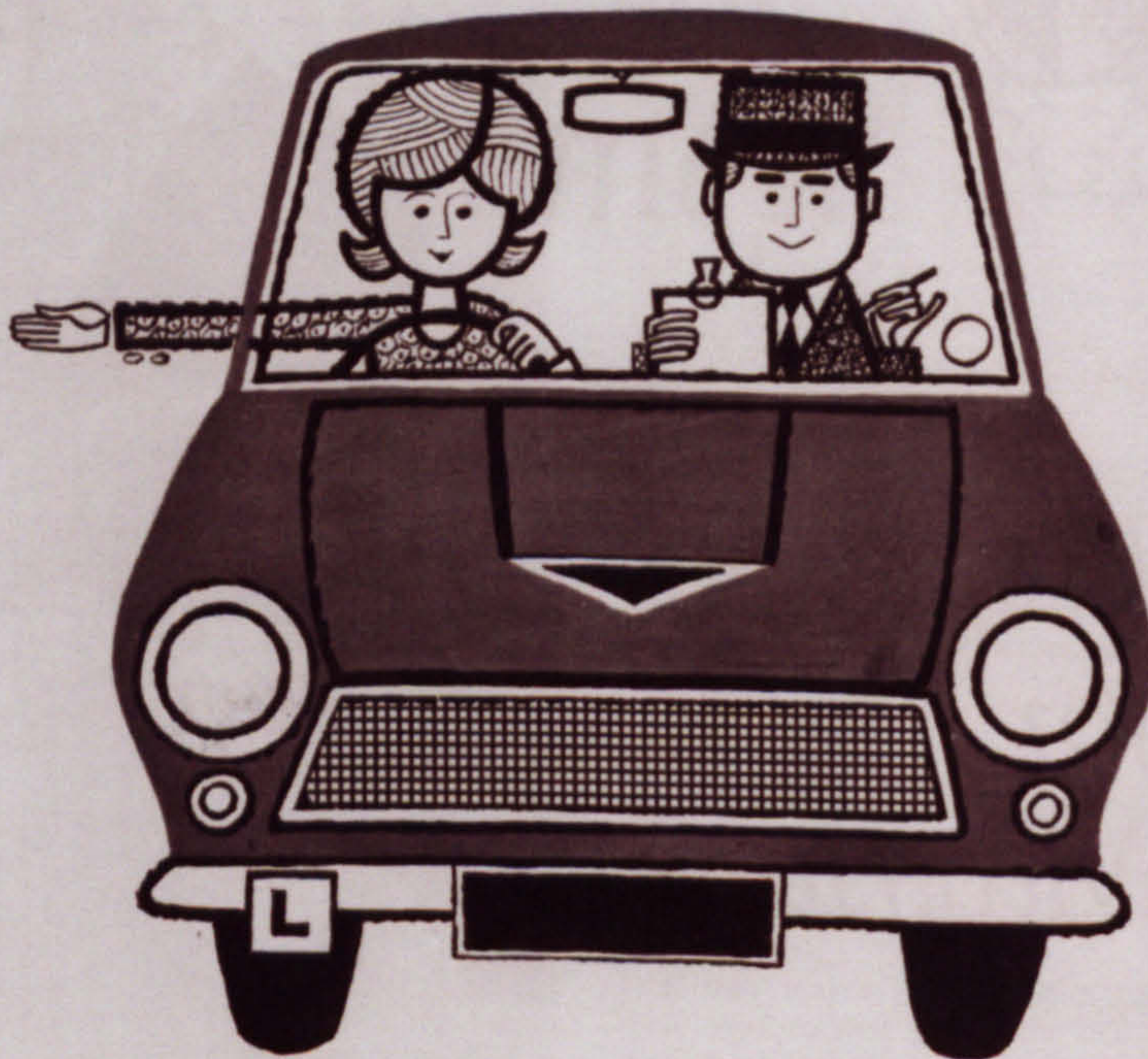
In her autobiography, Sandie Shaw charts the dissimilarities between the grown-up Dusty and herself in terms of fashioning, suggesting that Dusty even in the early 1960s was no slave to fashion: "*Dusty used to frighten me. I never knew what to say to her. She seems so much older and more sophisticated than me. [...] She had old fashioned make-up, high spiky heels, a bouffant hairdo that went out a decade before, and loved wearing those sparkly frocks that made me feel so uncomfortable*" (Shaw, 1992, p. 210).

<sup>77</sup> Dusty's consumption of fan magazines is significant. Although her life was frequently chaotic and included episodes of homelessness, attempted suicides and extreme drug and alcohol use, after her death friends found carefully preserved, in a lock-up in LA all her teenage film magazines from the 1950s (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 287).

<sup>78</sup> This phenomenon follows Stacey's contention after Winship that, from the 1950s, rather than preparing herself for her own consumption: "*there is something 'in excess' of patriarchal control which is produced though the discourses of consumption at this time*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 186). This move grants agency in that "*the needs of patriarchy and of capitalism may be seen to be in conflict, rather than working harmoniously to further control women*" (ibid.).



# Do you know where you are going?



1 When out with your new boy-friend you happen to meet some friends. What do you do?

- (a) have a quick word and walk on
- (b) introduce him if you stay talking for a while *MHL*
- (c) introduce him all round
- (d) leave him waiting while you talk about last week's dance

2 Your boy-friend is always talking about his former girl-friends. How do you react?

- (a) take an interest
- (b) become annoyed with him
- (c) tell stories of your former boy-friends *M*
- (d) listen hard so you learn about him through hearing about them *L*

3 How would you end a friendship?

- (a) write the boy a letter
- (b) give the message to one of his friends to pass on *M*
- (c) pretend to be out when he calls
- (d) tell him yourself *L*

4 Your boy-friend comments crushingly on your eye make-up. What do you do?

- (a) reply that you don't think much of his choice of ties
- (b) ask him what he likes girls to wear in general *M*
- (c) give up wearing cosmetics
- (d) listen calmly and in future wear less make-up *M*

5 What is free love?

- (a) sex outside marriage *M*
- (b) romance with anyone who has time to spare *L*

6 Your boy-friend tells blue jokes which embarrass you. What do you do?

- (a) laugh to order
- (b) say: 'You should save your jokes for the boys; I just don't appreciate them'
- (c) say 'If you thought I was a lady you wouldn't say such things' *MHL*
- (d) find another boy-friend

7 Friends pass on gossip about your boy-friend. How do you react?

- (a) challenge him with the stories
- (b) get your father to have a word with him
- (c) ignore it, because you like him *L*
- (d) tell him you're upset by the gossip, and give him the opportunity to clear the matter up *M*

8 You feel irritated because your boy-friend never gets off the bus before you, to help you down. What do you do?

- (a) tell him pointblank
- (b) be slow to leave your seat, thus forcing him to go first
- (c) say: 'After you getting off. I'll need your help as I've got a weak ankle' *MHL*

Please turn to p. 143 for answers



female. She commented that she had understood her own and Dusty's relationships as performers with their audience as interactive.<sup>79</sup>

Dusty disrupted the socially sanctioned and formularised make-up advice found in a range of girls and women's literature with her pragmatic suggestion regarding mascara: "*You have to spit in it to get it to the proper consistency*" (*Melody Maker's* 'Pop Think-in' in November 1965) this, and rumours that Dusty never took her make-up off or brushed through her hair (Grieg, 1989, p. 97) can be reasonably interpreted as running counter to the prevailing idealised representations of femininity and yet congruent with the perception of self experienced by women in this study.

Dusty's iconic identification as a woman made-up with wigs, dyed and backcombed hair, lipstick and eye make-up, perversely at odds with, behind and ahead of contemporary icons of beauty and fashion, provided a point of identification between fans and star, couched in a discourse of feminine excess. For participants in this study, Dusty presented an almost timeless model of sophistication, separated from the prosaic pursuit of fashion and somehow beyond, despite lyrical imperatives, the limits of boy/girl love.<sup>80</sup> For Sandy, Jean and Claire, Dusty's articulation of yearning, loneliness and other/worldliness distinguished Dusty from other female stars:

Claire: She always struck me as very, very much alone and someone who, yes, they were very much part of that sixties scene, but they obviously stood above it and beyond it in a timeless kind of way.

#### **4.4 Intimacies between femininities: subaltern pedagogies of fashioning and identification**

In discussions with research participants about their memories of Dusty and other female

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<sup>79</sup> "Dusty and myself were able to communicate with what the kids were wearing, and the make-up" (Davies in O'Brien, 1995, p. 92). Interviewed in 1995, Dusty commented "*I think it was a great look... it took so much effort though. I still have a tendency to do that, sleeping in my eye make-up. You get such a marvellous build up. There was so much on that it would take an awful lot to take it off. What with that and the beehive... We used to get the tour bus at eight in the morning. We'd probably only got to bed at five, so I'd sleep bolt upright with my eye make-up on*" (Murray, 1996, p. 115).

Dusty's methods reflected her pragmatism concerning cosmetics acts; a perception of slap that I discuss in more detail in 'Queening It'. Dusty's use of make-up resembles the expedient drive to achieve excess discussed by Vernon in her documentation of The Tiller Girls: "*Hot black was still used by the old timers but the younger set now spat into mascara blocks. A few adventurous ones, desperate for a more dramatic effect, tried other tricks. Black paper was cut into the thinnest fringe possible and stuck on their eyelids. This seemed the ultimate in glamour as they fluttered their eyes across the stage at each other. Sonia Hurst Thomson, who had made her stage debut in Madame Beeton's Orange Pippins, had a more effective idea. She cut a piece of her hair, rolled it round a matchstick, snipped it along the middle and laid the tiny fringe onto a slim strip of sticking plaster*" (Vernon, 1988, p. 118).

<sup>80</sup> "Dusty was the height of decadence; she was grown-up, but not in the boring way most adults were; Dusty's adulthood suggested all sorts of unknown indulgences and pleasures, including the intensely contradictory, confusing experience of sex and romance" (Grieg, 1989, p. 97).



music and film stars, a rich and broad sum of experiences accumulated that led me to refigure and revise my understanding of production and consumption. In addition, further layers of identifications required to be taken into account, intimacies between femininities between girls and women, between white and Black, and the role of imaginary and real mentors. Some of the pleasures discussed by participants appeared to constitute what could be described as subaltern pedagogies, the paradoxically prodigious but neglected teaching and learning of specific social skills.

### Repeated Pleasures

The proliferation and improvement of musical technologies in the 1950s and 1960s was evidenced in many accounts. Women described hearing music from this period on the wireless and gramophone radios, record players, piped into the workplace, on reel to reel, on TV and at the cinema:<sup>81</sup>

AP: So what did you feel like when you were singing along with her? How would you describe that feeling?

Jean: Felt good. [Laughter] It was a good feeling, I don't know it gave you a sort of - it was quite a powerful feeling it gave you, it made you feel good, I'd put it on again and play it over again.

Jean had listened to some of these recordings on a regular basis for over forty years. The specific processes of record playing in her mother's living room was pleurably recalled: "*Records, yes, aha, she had a lovely big radiogram, it was walnut and like, the lid would go up and you'd put the record on and you just let it go and it come down very, very slowly*". In contradiction to the rock ideology's myth making she differentiated the democratic qualities of recorded music from the exclusivity of live performances. With a recording, the specific pleasures could be enjoyed ad infinitum, privately and collectively:

Jean: Oh aha, I mean I went last year to see Celia Cruz, I mean I'm really into sort of Latin

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<sup>81</sup> Of course this was accompanied by a proliferation of extra-musical materials on music and film stars in annuals magazines and ephemera. Participants like Jane and Jean enjoyed the apparent insights they contained into stars lives, work and homes:

Jean: "*I loved, I loved the movie annuals because I just loved what was going on and about the stars themselves and the music albums again about the singers you know, they'd do a wee sort of piece on each singer or group or whatever you know, all that kind of thing, yes*".

For many, the repetition of hearing favourite songs and artists, readily accessed and controlled, triggered bittersweet pleasures. A memory work text focussed on 'A's ambivalent love/fear of a nursery school teacher, Miss Burton. Epitomising an ideal of femininity Miss Burton fashioned herself "*like a ballerina with 'scraped-back' hair, flamboyant garments and excessive eyeliner whilst her house, in the posh part of town, smelt of face powder and perfume*". The memory of Miss Burton was always triggered when A heard Sinatra's *Strangers in the Night* as this song, inexplicably, was piped around the nursery daily.



American - I mean I just love it, I love - but quite honestly I just prefer just listening to - I mean it was good, it was a good night, but I quite like listening just to a cd and the music in my own home, with myself or with my friends really and sharing it.

For Sandy, repeated playings of recordings by Dusty, in a range of locations from at least 1964, the launch of the single *I just don't know what to do with myself* – during a period of personal transition, provide, in retrospect, a trigger for remembering ineffable yearnings:

Sandy: *I just don't now what to do with myself* [expressing recognition], and I just remember going - and my Grandma had just, she was quite bedridden really but she used to have these sort of fleeting moments and she used to get out of her bed and she used to - she said “*Right, I'm taking you to Aunty Ethel's in Blackside*” and she took me to Aunty Ethel's and I remember sort of wanting at this stage to play that record all the time and I didn't take it with me and we went to Aunty Ethel's and I was away the weekend and Aunty Ethel was just so kind to us all weekend and I came back and we'd had a lovely time and it was away from a lot of horrible stuff that was going on at home actually between my Mum and Dad and when I came back - oh my cousin, this young man David and he sort of said, “*Oh well, I've got some Dusty Springfield songs.*”, and things and he played them for me and it was just like - I didn't - I sort of felt, I felt very close to him but I didn't feel like I fancied him or anything like that, but when I got home from this wonderful weekend I'd had I just cried and I kept playing this Dusty Springfield and it was just like, it was just like this sort of first feeling of sort of being in love and like, something you couldn't have, something you couldn't have, something you wanted so much, but you just couldn't have it, but it was just all like connected to Dusty and this record.

AP: So, although that's sort of, like, talking about sad emotions, you're saying you wanted to play it ?

Sandy: Yeah, again, you know -

AP: Yeah.

Sandy: -this song, again and again.

Claire described her Stage Two of Dusty love, as a further moment of epiphany; coming across *The Silver Collection* at a petrol station, and consequently enjoying an identification with Dusty sustained and developed through repeated consumption:<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Indeed, despite Claire's insistence on avoiding sentimentality, her descriptions of Dusty and her work and her own fan-ship –



Claire: I thought from then on - I, I don't know, something really, really struck a chord in me and I started buying every album I could and from that date, I just really drank on everything I possibly could and it was really - because there wasn't much around and I can only say that it just really struck a chord with me and it wasn't until I met other fans, key fans that - they said exactly the same thing, I listened, I don't so much now, but I would listen for hours [indecipherable] just listen to her the whole time.

AP: And where are you when you are - are you in different places with different songs or does it evoke one particular - ?

Claire: No.

AP: -feeling? You don't have an iconic memory in your mind of her, it's a backdrop to something?

Claire: You mean the songs?

AP: Yes.

Claire: The different songs? The different songs evoke very different moods.

Dusty also figured as a medium for powerfully felt emotions. For Jean, Dusty and Teresa have become fused in memories of first (mis)hearing/experiencing lesbian identification, triggered again at each subsequent playing of Dusty's music:

Jean: The way she made that remark [about Dusty being 'one of them'] it - to me it wasn't, it wasn't very nice, it wasn't in a funny way that, you know, it was more derogatory of Dusty and I felt for Teresa, and I was very close to Teresa, I think, you know, sexually, I think, you know, she was sort of questioning her sexuality. [...] Because she used to speak about Dusty a lot and that's how I started to, [...] that always then stuck in my mind, anytime now I talk about Dusty, all that comes into play as well, you know, but that conversation, that day, you know - and I thought, well, she feels really strongly about Dusty you know, Teresa did, and it was like, for Dusty whereas my aunt was sort of, kind of bordering, kind of thing, but saying things that weren't very nice, you know [...] I mean, I think Teresa was really, really liked Dusty and really for her, and I think my aunt liked her, but there was that underlying stuff, you know, being a lot

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"gobbling up" material on Dusty "*drinking on everything I possibly could*", songs "*hitting me like an express train*" as did hearing soul music more generally, Dusty producing a "*tremendous welling of emotions*" a "*tremendous outpouring*" etc. suggests both passionate levels of identification and kinaesthetically expressed emotions.



older and was putting in her tuppence worth, you know, and that's what she was saying, you know, whereas Teresa, you know - and every time I hear Dusty I think about Teresa and how my aunt stayed in Blantyre, you know, outside Glasgow, and I used to go and visit her and Teresa would come round and we would go into the town and that was a big thing for me and so we'd always listen to Dusty and I got excited because Teresa liked Dusty as well, so I put those two things - they came together for me, Teresa and Dusty.

The replication of a pleasurable identification, experienced in childhood, took place for some participants through a variety of mimicking practices that also extended into pleasurable identifications with girls and women, such as in Sandy's outdoor performances with friends and props to the soundtrack of Dusty.<sup>83</sup>

Inspired by Dusty-style bouffanting, Pauline and Sandy experimented with and took pleasure in creating other hairstylings that anthropomorphised music stars:

Sandy: Oh it was just - when I think of it now, I'd even forgotten about that, but Pauline she was the other - the hairdresser, she had very vivid red hair and even so she still had this one piece of bleached hair that she used to curl, she had all these heated rollers and all these bouncy curls but still this - and she called hers a Clodagh Rogers [...] She had it all curly and bouncy and it was red so that's what she called hers and we did -actually now I think about it, we did say, oh a 'Dusty', oh a 'Clodagh', oh a 'Cilla'.<sup>84</sup>

The pleasures appear to have been increased for girl fans in seeing forms of feminine excess and glamour by Kathy Kirby, Dusty and the like literally multiplied in the proliferation of Black girl and boy groups, for example in synchronised choreography and matching excessive costuming, pleasures

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<sup>83</sup> In this extract, negotiating a new friendship was facilitated through a dialogue of pleasurable mimicking.

Sandy: Well I remember that the first time I did that and it was on the stairs and the hall and this girl, this new girl had come into our street and she was my age but she was going off with - my sister and I were close, there was only a few months between us and we had been quite isolated in many ways and this new girl came into the street and her Mum was a singer, was a club singer, and she was called Terry Lee and she had big hair but it was sort of short, completely platinum blonde hair you know. So she sort of took her Mum off and she sort of said "*I'll show you my Mum's routine*" and she knew all the language and the singing, and she said "*I'll show you me Mum's routine*" And it was just like an instant thing well "*I'm going to be Kathy Kirby*" So I ran upstairs and I got these hairgrips, rolled a bit of hair around and stuck these hairgrips through, and I remember this young girl did this thing and I went to my Mum and I said "*Can I have your lipstick?*" and I just knew instantly what to do with it. I put the lipstick on and I went and got the Vaseline, nobody told me, but I got the Vaseline, put it on top on the lipstick and it was just, and they were really like - my sister and Anita were laughing at me, but I think there were like, "*Oh, how did she do that?*" you know, because I wasn't that kind of a girl, you know, I didn't - I think I was quite late at realising about fashion and things, I didn't cotton on to it very well, but it was just like, certainly like Kathy Kirby, I mean this big love thing, and then later on I sort of went on to do this little black mole, and Kathy Kirby has this little black mole there, you know, it was like, the lip, and that little black mole.

<sup>84</sup> Valentine and Wickham note that "*One of her [Dusty's] favourite tricks was to name her wigs Cilla, Lulu and Sandie after the other singers on the show*" [RSG/] (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 45). In the final years of Dusty's life, her hairdresser Debbie Dannell became a close friend. When Dusty's hair was thinning due to the effects of chemotherapy she used wigs she named, for example, Mavis and Doris and Maeve: "*Just as she had named her wigs at Ready Steady Go! nearly thirty years later she was still imbuing them with a life force of their own. Maeve for instance, was a bad lot, the one who might get into a hotel minibar before Debbie had cleared it*" (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 274).



that could be enjoyed in the vogue for twin and copy-cat hair, make-up and clothes, fashionings worn by friends, sisters and other close female relatives, often regardless of age difference:

Sandy: Oh I remember, again, I remember the images of the Ronettes because they were the Dusty-type hairstyles, you know, the sort of very fashioned hairstyles you know, they were, I mean that - that's what we called it in hairdressing actually, you know, that was the term that was sort of describing - I mean, but they wore the same clothes and everything, it was that time wasn't it, which was like, there was like - in that there was a hint of for us to copy, they were copying each other and copying other girl singers and everything. It was like, oh well something, some kind of a message in there to copy you know and everything, and yeah it was, oh, it was really exciting when I think of the Ronettes, and I loved some of their music but the whole package you know, the whole image.

Mentors to girls, like Sandy's aunt, introduced new forms of pleasure in fashioning that were to become treasured memories. Fashioning linked to: sensuality and transgression, the glamour of stars, countering the proscriptions couched against excess (again here on health grounds) and the ridiculing of excess, pubescence and desirable womanhood:

Sandy: Oh yeah, absolutely I mean, I just thought she was absolutely amazing because she was our link to that - you know, it was like, she brought that into our lives you know, my Dad said, *"What the bloody hell have you brought us there, some pyjamas?"* you know, because we'd got these things, *"What are they bloody pyjamas?"* you know, and, *"They aren't wearing those they will slip and slide in those and they'll break their ankles"*, and all that, you know, but my Auntie gave us permission and, you know, and it was just like, We can be part of that, you know, and it was gorgeous you know, it was lovely, yeah.<sup>85</sup>

### Soul sisters: cross-ethnic identifications

Many participants remembered Dusty as a driving force of the soul explosion in Britain in the early 1960s. For some, like Jean and Sandy, Dusty inhabited the aural landscape of Black American music that was beginning to dominate at proto-discos or specific 'wee worlds':<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Sandy's fascination fused femininity and (homoerotic) sexuality: *"Oh yeah, I mean, I remember staring at her and watching her put her make-up on [...] Yeah, and she let us do that, you know, and it wasn't, again it wasn't a verbalised thing, but she would let us go into her bedroom, she still lived at home, I mean, she was ten years older than us and she still lived at home and, and then she did get married and we went to her house but she, she used to let us go into her bedroom to watch her put her make-up on and sometimes she'd like, try it on us and that kind of thing, but she also - we used to eat in her bedroom, we used to eat things like cream and things, she used to take, you know - its just like a sensual, I mean, I'm saying that because it was like a really sensual experience, like putting the make-up on ritual and watching her and us trying a bit and eating cream, I remember cream out of a tin, I mean tinned cream, its just crazy, but it was very, very sensual"*.

<sup>86</sup> On the cusp of disco hegemony A had enjoyed attending a Saturday afternoon dance at Top Rank, (where the sound was Northern Soul) going on a regular basis from around aged 11 with her glamorous older cousin, Jennifer. A traced her awareness



Jean: I don't know, again it was that thing you know, when I heard Motown at the time I had to have it, I had to have, I had an old record player and I mean I'd go up to my room, I'd buy the singles, I'd buy albums and listen to Motown, listen to Dusty, you know.

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Sandy: - like we went to this place called Reggies which was - it was dance class place, it was a couple who taught ballroom I think, and dancing, but you know as a sign of the times, it wasn't called a disco, I don't know what it was called but it was where you went to dance and it was young people, there was a young people's night and we used to do this sort of square dancing, you know, this sort of 'round the handbags' type dancing and that was, and, but it was like, I mean, I remember a real soul influence by this time because I remember - I think my clothes were much more old-fashioned but my sister at this stage, she had a checked shirt and it was like this skinhead you know coming time, so I mean, I don't know what age we could have been then, but I do remember it was a lot about soul music but there was certainly Dusty in there and it fitted you know in a very souilly kind of way for sure, and black soul music -, and you know and certainly hearing a lot of Dusty at that time as well [...] I mean I loved it and it was at that sort of time when you were - I mean, I remember it was the in thing to love, anyway, certainly at school, you know, in circles you know, it was Tamla Motown girls coming to school with Tamla Motown and stuff.

Many participants been, introduced to R&B, blues and, or soul by their parents and grandparents, as Dusty was herself:

Jean: I like The Beatles, I didn't go overboard with it you know, but it's mostly like, Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, the older stuff, because my mother sang all these songs so she -

AP: So your mum liked black -?

Jean: Oh aye, she – yes, yes, aye, so I was influenced a lot by listening to it you know, on the radio and her singing all these songs and you know.<sup>87</sup>

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and longing for specific fashions from this period.

<sup>87</sup> Michelle, born in 1971, could not recall having seen Dusty and was apparently unaware of her iconic status, however, linked her to African American vocalists through her evocation of blues-type yearning

AP: What do you like about her? When did you start liking Dusty?

Michelle: About five years ago when my gran had some of her music.[...] I didn't know anything about her politics. I don't know anything about her at all, I just liked her music.

AP: What do you think about her voice? What did you think when you heard her voice?

Michelle: Well, it was, at the time when I was kind of listening to like, Ella Fitzgerald and what's her name - the other woman?

AP: Billie Holiday?

Michelle: Billie Holiday and all that kind of stuff and I was listening to that [...]

AP: What did her voice make you feel like, can you remember?

Michelle: Oh no. [Laughter]

AP: What?

Michelle: I don't know whether it was because I was listening to her as well as listening to the other ones but everything just seemed like, life is so tough kind of –





13. Diana Ross in *Top Pop Scene* annual, 1974, page 42 and 43.



For some participants born in the 1940s, iconic memories of some Black performers fused the racist context for such representations with an exciting undercurrent of unnameable transgression and dissident femininity, troubling the context of family viewing:

Elizabeth: Well, yes we're going back to the 50s now when I was a teenager and I was still at home now we must have been in neighbours' houses watching TV because I'm not quite sure when mum and dad got a TV but it doesn't matter because I do vividly remember watching TV shows with Mum and Dad when Eartha Kitt was a huge, huge star in the UK and she was - well I know she shocked my Mum and Dad and I think we all thought of her as completely outrageous because she was so overtly sexy, now I don't think we, we didn't use the term sexy, sexy wasn't a word that was used then and I don't think it was, it was a word that came much later on and I don't quite remember the word that was used to describe her, but I know she had - yes, she had a tremendous impact and I think it did encourage the idea, you know, that black women were different from us and the way that Eartha Kitt performed, you know, it was like - like a- you thought of a tigress or something like that, I mean, obviously an image which she encouraged.

By the 1960s, Elizabeth, had noted the fashioning of both Black British performers and neighbours<sup>88</sup> and Sandy remembered herself and her friends as being unequivocal in their admiration for Motown star Diana Ross, linked again here with Dusty:

AP: So can I ask you about - have there ever been any Black stars that you feel like you sort of thought were amazing or glamorous or attractive or, you know, have there ever been -

Sandy: Oh, Diana Ross for sure [...] Diana Ross, that, I mean way back to then I remember being so into Diana Ross you know, I was like, introduced to Tamla Motown by a classmate who'd got money and could buy records and showed me pictures and everything, but I mean right back to the first stuff that Diana Ross did that was popularised and everything, she was I couldn't say as much as an icon really as Dusty but she certainly, I mean, by me and by friends appreciated as a really beautiful woman [...] Oh yeah, a beautiful woman and beautiful music and everything.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth: And the other woman, the other woman though that influenced me a lot was Shirley Bassey, because Shirley Bassey was a bit like our Jamaican neighbours in terms of you know she - her hair was like bouffant and very smooth and everything but she was obviously a Black woman.

<sup>89</sup> Diana Ross herself gravitated into the Motown family after studying cosmetology 'to do hair' (Hirshey, 2001, p. 183).



## Intimate Identifications with Dusty

The advent of a white British star who had crossed and could articulate this otherworldly, raw and expressive musical form provided opportunities for fans to engage in identifications and self-narrativisation through Dusty's powerfully expressed soul performances:

Claire: I was already listening to soul music, I mean I listened to a lot of black music, it really, really hit me like an express train, it really did and I did even talk to other fans who have said the same thing, because it's something to do with making an emotional connection with a song and a lot of it would just be that I loved her voice and she did it so well, but there were certain songs which I could name, which you absolutely double up and you say, 'Oh God I did that.' and I think that men would probably say that as well, but it was something to do with a - I'm trying to think what I've written about it - ruthlessly, ruthlessly expressed her own - exposed her own weakness.

The levels of identification enjoyed by Claire cast Dusty in the role of guardian, mentor and the musical interpreter of strong, often distressing emotions. These accounts seem all the more profound since Claire was at pains to distance herself from the 'soppy':

Claire: But the - I don't so much have a picture of her as a sense, and I think it's a very powerful extraordinary sense, of somebody not singing to you, but a very personal, a very personal communication and I've written about that and really felt that, both that she was singing almost within the room, but also that she was singing about things you know, that I thought very much, 'Oh my god that happened to me. I did that. I did that.'

AP: [...] could you give me an example of a song that did that for you and describe a little bit about these associations and memories then?

Claire: Aha. Well there were several. I suppose one would be *Lose again* which was a live performance in '79, you might have seen it, at the Royal Albert Hall and I've seen it and I've seen her doing it.

AP: Have you?

Claire: I've heard and seen the video where she sits down and does it, but I remember being - having a sense of being on a railway station and I can't remember the exact words, but - and being unable to release yourself from that and I have been in the past been dependent, been in very dependent relationships that I've hated myself for, but I - there were a couple of lines in it,



a few lines that I very much identified with personally, like, there was a line in *Breakfast in Bed* which, it just like hit me like a train and I knew that I'd been there similarly with this, but there were also some very, I suppose, some quite moving lines in it, it sounds very soppy, but when I sent a wreath I put the lines on it which was, '*When the heart calls the mind obeys, oh, it knows better than me.*' and I thought that, and the way she sang it just really summed up what a lot of us had found in our lives.<sup>90</sup>

Claire became involved in the fan network in the early 1990s through the *Dusty Bulletin*:

Claire: [...] I've toned that down a bit, I no longer write to lots of people, I just have a few, few people that I would ring up, like when I read the book [*Dancing with Demons*, the biography published just before the interview that had stirred up controversy amongst fans] you know, there's always somebody that you can - I think I have felt very much at points during the nineties and until she died that she was neglected and that's a feeling that a lot of fans have, that she hasn't been fully appreciated and only when she died was that really changed, so there's a certain sense of wanting to communicate with other people who felt the same, because it wasn't a general, you know, because in the sixties everyone would have known, in the 90s it was, except at points, for example in the film what's it called again?

AP: *Pulp Fiction* [*Son of a Preacher Man* is featured in the soundtrack]

Claire: *Pulp Fiction*, that film - people, young people were, 'Oh Goodness'. But apart from that it would be a question of keeping in touch with people, you couldn't assume that other people would automatically appreciate her.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Claire described the activities of the Dusty fan network as including: providing mutual emotional support when Dusty's work or life had been maligned, contributing to and consuming the *Dusty Bulletin* and various Dusty websites, participating as guests or hosts at Dusty themed events, communing for gatherings such as at Dusty's grave on anniversaries of her birth and death and forming a bulwark against the, to Claire unimaginable, set of people who do not appreciate her work:

Claire: if you ask a Dusty fan why she's not more popular, I couldn't tell you because we all feel that she's changed our lives and I can't imagine that anyone else wouldn't feel that and I have friends that listen to her and don't feel that - don't ask me because I don't understand that.

AP: And they articulate it in what way? What do you feel when you say "*Well, I really like her music*"?

Claire: Well, I think they haven't listened to her if you'd listened to her and they don't get it, I feel quite depressed but the fact that she is so admired by so many musicians and singers I must be right. [Laughter]

<sup>91</sup> Claire and some female friends in the fan network are feminists. Communicating and sharing their appreciation of Dusty has included speculation about aspects of Dusty's more self-destructive excesses, chronicled in a book, and as far as Claire and her co-fans are concerned, unsatisfactory way in the latest Dusty biography (Valentine and Wickham, 2000) Wickham is frequently a media spokesperson for Dusty. She was the surprise guest to congratulate the Dusty soundalike, Emma Wilkinson on winning *Stars in their eyes* in 2001. I wrote a memo after my meeting with Claire that: *Immediately before and after our meeting she discussed her theories that Dusty's self-harming and other behaviour linked to classic evidence of child abuse.* [This is the field that Claire principally works in professionally. She has written a book about incest.] *She pointed to the fact that Dusty's brother was 'totally weird, reclusive.'* as further evidence for this. *Dusty had apparently never discussed these things and we agreed that this was a tragically underlying theme in the new biography 'Dancing with Demons' released a couple of months before our meeting. She was upset that no one seemed to have wanted to help Dusty in this respect. She was furious that the authors had been allowed to call their account 'authorised' -, since it was posthumously published, and, bearing in mind Tom Springfield's track-record Claire believed that it was unlikely to have been authorised by him. Claire adopted the role of spokesperson for outraged fans.*



Since Dusty's death, Claire has found ways to engage in public and private shows of appreciation of her work and to Dusty more directly. Journalism was

Claire: - one of the main ways. I wrote an obituary and so on and I'll always do that. I mean, I speak on the radio if ever there's an opportunity, so that would be important to me, other than that it would be phone calls or playing music with friends. I went to her grave in the summer as a lot of people did, so I suppose that's - I'm not sure if that's quite trying to say something to her I think, rather than to anybody else.

### Live versus reproduced pleasures

In contrast to the stated pleasures participants derived from repeated listenings (to pop/soul), rock ideology has privileged liveness, polarising it from notions of the inauthentic with which pop is associated. The latter was increasingly conceptualised as manufactured in the time span of Dusty's career.<sup>92</sup> In contrast to the public province of rock, the consumption of Dusty, throughout her early recording career, generally took place in the domestic space, mediated through her eponymous TV series, and frequent performances on *Saturday Club*, *Easy Beat*, *Top Gear*, *Ready Steady Go!* Radio 1 and Radio Caroline play, though magazines, music journalism and girls or women's popular literature.<sup>93</sup> Second-wave feminism produced a far-reaching and influential critique of both popular television and mainstream women's magazines characteristically linking these mediums to notions of passivity engineered by patriarchy (e.g. Craik, 1994, pp. 48-55) and this is likely to have further marginalised the feminist media representation of female stars such as Dusty.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> However, Frith has pointed out that liveness, of audiences hearing the real voice of stars, even at concerts is rarely really experienced. Frith describes the strangeness of hearing Al Green's real voice during a performance where the artist moved into the audience (Frith, 1988, p. 11). Many of Dusty's keenest fans, such as Claire, sustained their interest in her without ever having seen a live performance, in fact, none of the participants, including myself, ever saw Dusty live and Jean stated her preference of domestic consumption of music to the live event. Interestingly, Claire obscures this somewhat when she talks about seeing Dusty perform live - on video. Although the authentic versus manufactured dichotomy requires deconstruction in relation to the historical privileging of rock over other popular forms, such essentialising was also used within Motown to differentiate soul authenticity such that "...the Supremes were seen as wholesome, glamorous and frothy, while Martha and the Vandellas were credited with being funkier and more 'authentically' black" (Whitall, 1998, p. 80). In a related observation Lynda Laurence who became a Supreme in 1972 teased out the specificities of the discourse on authenticity in reading the work of the Supremes for Motown "At the time I thought Martha and the Vandellas were more soulful. And that wasn't unusual for me to think that because [Berry Gordy] was going for something very different with the Supremes. Let's go into the pop market, why aren't we there? And I think that was brilliant on his part really. Because that's where the Supremes needed to be. So when he groomed them for that particular genre, I thought it was the best thing he could ever have done. Because we already had the R&B thing down. Diana [Ross] was never an R&B act, as it were. She's going to be deemed that because she's a black person, and unfortunately we still haven't come to grips with the fact that just because you are black doesn't mean you're an R&B artists" (Lynda Laurence, in Whitall, 1998, pp. 80-81).

<sup>93</sup> Only eight of the approximately twenty shows Dusty made for the BBC were retained. A tribute to Dusty in 2000 used footage, including an extract of Dusty performing with Jimi Hendrix, from private collections (Library Association Multimedia Information and Technology Group, Vol. 2, (1), p. 6).

<sup>94</sup> Feminist politics in Britain encouraged the growth of a Women's Movement inspired music and women's bands. Invariably these bands were consumed live. In the preamble to an interview with the seminal women's band of this era, The Stepney Sisters Marion Fudger writes: "Women and Rock Music. Can they be combined? Whilst some women work to sort out this problem, others bop on regardless. But the need is growing for non-sexist music and bands are slowly emerging. Primarily the call came from the Women's Movement for its conferences, benefits and socials. Now the demand is wider." (*Spare Rib*, no.46, May, 1976)



Recorded music is capable of replicating, across a lifetime of listening, a virtual reproduction of a piece of music heard as in the first instance, despite a shifting context of time, materiality and subjectivity. In the light of the adoption of memory work methods by feminists in an attempt to add to the knowledge of how femininity and identity is (re)constructed, music has begun to be cited as a potentially invaluable tool to trigger memory.<sup>95</sup>

Whereas Stacey's work contributed the extra-cinematic visual pleasures to feminist knowledge of women and popular culture, fan accounts of Dusty comment upon the vocalisations and the sounds of stars' performances in their pleasurable identifications: "*And most wonderful of all was her voice- so strong and clear but with a raw vulnerable edge that expressed pain and longing and passion... all the things I knew I was destined for too*" (Moffatt, 1999, p. 50)

### Intimacies between fashioned femininities

Davis has revealed how, in the 1960s it was not just fans like Sandy and Jean, remote from their idol, who were engaged in mimicking Dusty's fashioning excesses<sup>96</sup> Dusty was involved in an ongoing dialogue of fashioning femininity with fans in ways that confound expectations of star/fan fashioning relationships and modes of identification. The development of young women's habits of consumption and identification with televised forms of femininity in the 1960s involved complex processes of projection and introjection, between young women performers and their studio and television-viewing audiences.<sup>97</sup>

Stacey has demonstrated that as commodities associated with stars became more readily available, the practice of copying stars forms of femininity became more within the reach of female fans and that it was through the clothes, make-up and hairstyles that stars were most commonly remembered (Stacey, 1994, p. 111). Dusty's idols, her own stylings and the consequent copycat

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<sup>95</sup> Kuhn has asked, "What place do images and sounds occupy in the activity of remembering? Are they especially prominent amongst memory's pretexts, source materials forms of expression/ What binds images and sounds in personal memory with images and sounds in collective memory?" (Kuhn, 1995, p. 107).

<sup>96</sup> "All the girls [who formed the discerning *Ready Steady Go!* audience] were adopting Dusty's panda-eye look. At one time we used shoe polish and had great difficulty in getting it off!... Dusty though asserted herself by going one step further than anyone else. If girls were applying heavy paint to their eyelids, she would put even more on, making her eyelashes even thicker, her hair more outrageously peroxide blonde. Sometimes her make-up was so dark that when she appeared on TV her eyes became invisible, engulfed by two coal black circles" (Davies in O'Brien, 1999, p. 80).

<sup>97</sup> Regular dancing female audience members on *Dick Clark's American Bandstand*, RSG's! US counterpart, had become stars through the fanaticism of principally female viewers: "Their hairstyles, their dance partners, their clothes and of course their dance routines, all had Philadelphia's teenagers glued to their screens [...] By the time the show went national, becoming *American Bandstand*, the 'regulars' were getting more fan mail than the acts, at the rate of 15,000 letters a week. There was a special *Bandstand* committee, and a magazine *16*, where the girls wrote their own columns and were pictured wearing fluffy jumpers and slacks, sitting on the living room floor with their scrapbooks" (Greig, 1989, p. 29). In her autobiography, Aretha Franklin states that as a child she too had learnt the names of the regular dancers (Franklin and Ritz, 1999, p. 98).



fashioning by young women fans were largely distinct from the norms of British femininity recommended in contemporary texts.<sup>98</sup>

Research participants remembered a heightened sense of collectivity in the period from the 1950s in terms of fashioning and performance. Girl and boy groups proliferated, fashioning followed the 'hints to copy' from stars like the Ronettes, and dancing, for the first time, allowed for new expressions of youth identity. For both fans of and performers in girl groups, such as the Lana Sisters where Dusty made the initial entry into stardom, or the Motown girl groups including the Supremes, the most popular group in Motown history, aspects of identification which are both relational and identificatory abound.<sup>99</sup>

Whitall's interviews with female Motown stars offer insights into the array of identifications, projections and introjections at work in women's accounts of suburb versus ghetto, of West and East coast differences, gender divisions and the public performance of synchronised feminine excess, including views on choreography and costuming and the performance of legendary repertoires, in some cases over a thirty year career (Whitall, 1998).<sup>100</sup>

Fan (and star) pleasures in public as well as private consumption and performances rely on the degrees of proximity that are historically and socially constructed to create appropriate degrees of negotiation. In March 1965 the Motown Revue played at London's Astoria Theatre, Finsbury Park. Dave Godin, founder of the British Motown Appreciation Society with whom Dusty worked closely recalls

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<sup>98</sup> Dusty, suggests that the panda-eyed cosmetic act was inspired by French models "*A lot of French Vogue models had black eyelids*" (Pomphrey, 1994).

<sup>99</sup> Stacey's findings confirm this since her respondents recall memories of cinematic and extra-cinematic pleasures that are often conceptualised as moments of 'sacred intimacy' of, and 'heightened enjoyment' in collective consumption. For Stacey, these accounts "*could be read as further contributing to the feminisation of cultural consumption; femininity being culturally constructed as relational and masculinity as more individuated*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 101).

<sup>100</sup> The endurance of the Motown Revue and related regroupings and themed live shows alongside the continuous re-issue of back-catalogues, compilations and cover-versions of Motown stars and Dusty can be analysed as being motivated by positive and negative factors. Many Black Motown female stars have had to return to the road as their sole source of income. Re-groupings of Motown stars and compilations illustrate the broader commercialisation of nostalgia and the desire of existing and new fans to see and hear performances. Revival performances also facilitate the articulation of the reciprocities of loyalties and the enduring intimacies between femininities.

Although Motown boss Gordy was intent on a crossover, Black R&B breakthrough, the arranging, staging and grooming of women who were to attract the interest of girl fans across ethnicities proved phenomenally successful. The notion of Gordy's total control in the manufacture of the image of the Supremes through the deployment of choreographers, stage craft experts and the Motown Charm School is rejected by Mary Wells: "*Motown went along with our sexy but wholesome image for the Supremes, but, contrary to what some people think, it wasn't foisted upon us. We really were those girls, and we never felt that what we were on stage was anything but an extension of our true personalities. When I had seen myself in the mirror years before in a homemade costume, I saw a girl every bit as glamorous as the one on television in 1965*" (Wells, 1986, p. 192). Wells also records that even when the demands of TV required specialised make-up techniques the Supremes continued to apply their own make-up as did Dusty (ibid). Grieg has pointed out that such cross-ethnic identifications were germinal in the burgeoning TV pop of America in this period: "*The overriding feature of the Bandstand girls was that they were all Italian Americans from Philadelphia's large immigrant community. As such, they seemed to exist in a world somewhere between the white suburbs and the black urban ghettos. For the teenagers watching the show, they seemed to represent a channel of communication between the performers and the viewers, black or white, promising an easy passage between the two worlds for future generations*" (Grieg, 1989, pp. 28-29).



Every soul fan in London had turned out to pack that place. I can't describe the air of celebration. Everyone was so elated that they were talking to strangers. I sat talking with Dusty in the stalls and some kids came up asking for her autograph, 'Any other time.' she said, 'but not tonight because I'm here as a fan' (O'Brien, 1999, p. 62).<sup>101</sup>

### Dusty appreciators

Jean's 'wee world', Sandy's modest record collection but fanatical hair fashioning a la Dusty, Ellen's self-nomination as 'appreciator' rather than 'connoisseur' and Claire's qualities of diligent fan-ship, rooted as it is in the pleasures of self-narrativisation set themselves apart in their heterogeneity from male collectors. Straw has pointed out that male practices of accumulation take shape:

in an ongoing relationship between the personal space of the collection and public, discursive systems of ordering or value. These public systems are no less arbitrary, or course in their choice of objects or criteria of value, but they tie each male's collection to an ongoing, collective enterprise of cultural archaeology (Straw, 1997, p. 6).

The social uses for fans of Dusty records and fan memorabilia more generally expresses a qualitative rather than quantitative form of activity as in this lesbian fan's account, reminiscent of Sandy's invocation of the abundant signifiers of Kathy Kirby/Dusty: "*The prize of my collection had been a double-page spread from Fab magazine . She was wearing pink - hot pink , her favourite lipstick shade . Her hair was glossy platinum with perfect kiss-curls and she was smiling wickedly, as though sharing a naughty secret with me*" (Moffatt, 1999).<sup>102</sup>

### Intimacies between (lesbian) femininities

The accounts by research participants and my own memory work suggested the need to interrogate the pleasures in intimacies between femininities, examining the ways through which female fans and audiences for women stars and Dusty was of course both fan and star, derived pleasure through their production and consumption of stars voices, still promotional photographs, record covers, television performances and other media representations. Just as research into the self-fashioning by

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<sup>101</sup> Mary Wells recalls the ambivalence of the British press's fascination at this time: "*In the beginning they referred to the three of us [Supremes] as 'negresses' a term we had never heard [...] We were exotic darlings, sexy and cute, and all the more interesting because we were black and hailed from what the foreign press liked to portray as a rat-infested ghetto*" (Wells, 1986, p. 186).

<sup>102</sup> Feminist scholarship has attempted to account for and begin to define the formally subordinated definitions of female fetishism Gamman and Makinen productively challenged the Freudian and Lacanian tradition of discounting forms of female fetishism in *Female Fetishism: a New Look*, Lawrence and Wishart (1994)



women of forms of femininity such as hair and make-up can be seen to illuminate women's social, historical and cultural aspirations and fantasies so "*The choice of records can constitute a cultural expression for those whose access to other avenues of expression may be blocked*" (Whiteley, 1997, p. xiv).<sup>103</sup>

The private, pleasurable identification and consumption of female stars by girls and women within the domestic space is an important phenomenon to interpret in an analysis of constructions of femininity. Accounts that reveal the construction of lesbian identities and identifications within the domestic space are rare, even in feminist literature, but are articulated by participants in this study. For example Jean and Sandy discussed the ways that Dusty's mysteriously transgressive sensuality, and their respective relatives responses to it, encouraged their imagining different sexualities. Intimacies between (lesbian) femininities are also to be found in the literature on Dusty and in some accounts that centre on the collective pleasures enjoyed by both Dusty and Dusty fans in public contexts. Whereas Stacey recognised the pleasures of wartime cinema-going as a 'pulling together', lesbian habitués of The Gateways bar in London during the 1960s experienced a similarly ambivalent sense of identification in collective consumption of recorded music.<sup>104</sup> For the many lesbians visiting the Gateways the rhetoric of permissiveness failed to penetrate the relatively overwhelming culture of compulsory heterosexuality and the reasons were manifold for escaping/ism.<sup>105</sup> For lesbian audiences,

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<sup>103</sup> In an example of intimacies between star and fan, and where a record collection represents personal symbolism, Martha Reeves relates the story of a fan from Leeds who sought her out at her sound recording studio after a relationship break-up. The fan had some Motown records and said that they were all that remained from a bad marriage, Reeves records how she counselled the fan: "*I said No, no, no, no, don't feel like that, because there is love for everybody, Mama said there is a mate for everything... I shared that information with her, to show that just a little help counts when you are down*". Seven years later, the fan returned to Motown to be married at the Motown Museum where Reeves 'added diva presence' on the lawn. Reeves approved of the new partner and signed some of the couple's 3000 Motown records (Whitall, 1998). Empirical research on women's enjoyment of other women's performances are scarce and the complex range of identifications available to Black women performers are yet to be adequately accounted for. The impersonations required of the Blossoms can be clearly interpreted as indicative of record companies broader racist subjugation of 'Blackness' in marketing their product. In the absence of famous Black stars, future performers like Mary Wilson and other Black fans forged ambivalent identifications with white stars like the McGuire Sisters, Doris Day and Patti Page (Grieg, 1989, p. 116). Cindy Birdsong, another Supreme, remembers that Dorothy Dandridge and Lena Horne were her sole Black models. She too focused her identifications on Hollywood: "*I was a big fan of Doris Day's. For a long time I wanted to be Doris Day! You see we didn't have the black stars on film to idolise or look up to*" (ibid.).

<sup>104</sup> The group identity of wartime cinema going for Stacey's respondents "*was a central component of the 'atmosphere' and appeal, repeatedly remarked upon*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 100). Stacey utilises Dyer's model of utopian fantasies to expand her analysis of both the specific collective pleasures enjoyed by her respondents and importantly, to analyse what cinema-goers were escaping from. (ibid. p. 102)

<sup>105</sup> A possible further reason for mobilisation around familiar anthems was that many Gateways regulars and a stream of pilgrims, originated from homes across Britain. Intolerable homophobia in rural and provincial towns led to the migration of thousands of lesbians and gay men to London who frequently formed communities of support and solidarity through safe spaces of which the Gateways was the best known lesbian example and where opportunities to express, collectively, bittersweet emotions may have been cherished by some. Rather than confirming the mythology of gay men's history of collective social pleasures versus the conceptualisation of the solitary, closeted spinster, Stacey's findings allow scope for interrogating histories of women's collective pleasures, read as both "*relational and gendered - Escapism is not merely an individuated process, but rather involves a submergence of self into a more collective identity which could be seen to have a gendered [feminine] specificity*" (ibid. p. 101). Frith asserts that "*...one of the central uses of popular music in this century [is] to conceal the furtive pleasures of indulging in private fantasies in public places*" (Frith, 1988, p. 129).



such moments of collective identification, albeit in relation to recorded, manufactured sound, could be interpreted as dissident and political.<sup>106</sup>

Involved herself in the emergent lesbian scene in London in the 1960s, Wilmer also records that specific sound's galvanised the sense of collective pleasure and identification. The Gateways, where Wilmer and Dusty were regulars played music that included the Isley Brothers' *This old heart of mine*, James and Bobby Purify's *Do unto me (girl, as you'd have me do to you)*. But Val Wilmer states that "*it wasn't until Engelbert Humperdinck's Please release me or Dusty's You don't have to say you love me, that the majority of women took to the floor*" (Wilmer, 1989, p. 163).

For Sandy, identification with Dusty culminated in a personal recognition of both love for Dusty and her own lesbianism: "*Well really, I mean I've written a story about this and I've got it somewhere and it's called 'Dusty Springfield and the buried treasure'. [...] but I really, I mean, I wrote this story and it was acknowledging, later on, that it was the first falling in love*".

### Cross-ethnic identifications

Research participants (re-)constructions of femininity by Dusty and other figures loosely framed by the period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s in Britain seemed suffused with complex cross identifications and racisms. Despite some political resistance by mainstream and feminist writers to acknowledge this, cross-ethnic identifications were made between white women and women of colour.

The forms of radical feminine excess performed by music stars, that provided a model for Dusty were in great part generated by American female vocalists notably Reeves and Franklin.<sup>107</sup> The fascination of Dusty, a number of research participants as young women, myself included, into the forms of voice, clothes, hair and make-up fashioning by Black women can be discredited as racist, but this research is an attempt to begin to understand more about how such memories of difference and identification can be considered as yielding more positive evidence of intimacies, despite contemporary racist and misogynist discourses, between femininities from and to a range of ethnicities.<sup>108</sup> For Mary

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<sup>106</sup> Self-identified lesbian tribal elder Jackie Forster has claimed "*At Gateways they would play her records all the time, along with Doris Day and Julie Andrews. We adored Dusty, everyone bought her records. Especially 'You don't have to say you love me', that was a sell-out. When we started discos that was always requested... Dusty was attractive just because she was a glamorous singer and a lesbian. I think if she had sung crap we'd have still loved her because even though she never imposed it, or mentioned it, she was our role model*" (Jackie Forster in O'Brien, Dusty 1999, p. 176).

<sup>107</sup> Reeves' own early identifications include star and family members who expressed to excess. Reeves' mother "*used to wear camellias in her hair because she loved Billie Holiday so. She used to sing her songs, and I guess I am the epitome of her dreams... so she encouraged me as a child. She always told me, 'Never sing a song unless you mean it from your heart'*" (Spector in Abbott, 2001, p. 171).

<sup>108</sup> Debates on cross-ethnic fascinations and 'culturally appropriated identifications' have tended to focus on white male appropriations, from Elvis on, of Black forms of music and fashioning to excess. However, this is also resistant to an overarching reductivism. Greig records that Mary Wilson dated Hilton Valentine of the Animals in the 1960s. He was "*astonished to find that*



O'Brien, the identifications that culminated in the radical construction of her alter ego Dusty Springfield were formed from identifications and introjections of a spectrum of stars fashionings and voices. However, such cross-ethnic identifications can be separated at least at points into those that Dusty constructed and the projective and introjective identifications of others.<sup>109</sup>

By the 1940s, Mary O'Brien, who remembered herself as "*an awful, fat, ugly, middle-class kid*" (Scotland on Sunday, 15 February, 1998, p. 15) had become fascinated in particular with Black female performers.<sup>110</sup> Unusually, she had forged an idealised construction of stardom that was fused with Blackness. O'Brien notes that by the age of ten, Dusty was committed to being a blues singer Dusty was frank when recalling why it had appealed:

Well it sounded good, It sounded exotic [...] It certainly wasn't what any of the other kids wanted to be. They wanted to be really sensible things like radiographers. And 'blues singer' had a certain eroticism to it, and it also meant 'black'. I was fascinated with black faces and black voices.... I had no idea what it meant! (O'Brien, 1999, pp. 16-17)<sup>111</sup>

Despite the periodic styling of Western fashion at specific moments to evoke exoticism, Dusty's identification extends the narrow formulas of exotic fashion, of unselfconscious exploitation and appropriation of motifs of difference. Black women (stars) had begun to embody a powerful form of radical femininity. White participants endorsed Whitall's observation that, "*Among the most enduring Motown images, though are those of the girl groups, and of the classic Motown divas. For many of us, infant notions of feminine glamour were nurtured by satiny black and white glossies of Brenda Holloway and Tammi Tyrell*" (Susan Whitall, 1998, p. xiv). Such identifications cannot be universally dismissed as racist appropriations when uttered by white fans. The appeal of sound for specific listeners must be understood as both personal and collective, and as deriving meaning for

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*she hadn't heard of any of the Black artists he played her. While Mary had been listening to Patti Page and the Contours in Detroit, Hilton had been busily learning John Lee Hooker songs in North Shields*" (Greig, 1989, p. 123).

<sup>109</sup> Although this chapter has as its focus the White British performer Dusty Springfield, mis-recognition of ethnicities, identifications, projections and introjections occur between Black fans and stars. Brenda Holloway was the first US West Coast artist signed for Motown and had a different image from Detroit's home-grown roster: "*Well I was born pronouncing my words, I don't know why. And people would always think I was white on the phone. As a matter of fact, I have a long nose, and when I went on the road, we would have black and white pictures, so people would say, 'Brenda Holloway's white!' and I'd say, 'Oh I don't think so! Brenda Holloway is Black.' I'll never forget there was a crowd of white girls behind me, and we were doing a show And they said, 'Well who are you?' I said, 'I'm Brenda Holloway.' They said, 'No you're not, Brenda Holloway is white.' I said, 'No Brenda Holloway has a long nose, and in black and white photographs she photographs white but she's Black.'... They'd always call me the Black Barbra Streisand*" (Holloway in Whitall, 1998).

<sup>110</sup> She heard recordings of Bessie Smith as a very young girl, and chose to perform 'St Louis Blues' at a school event (O'Brien, 1995, p61) It is tempting to speculate on whether Smith's own then unnameable sexuality was also heard by Mary O'Brien.

<sup>111</sup> In the *NME* poll of 1965, and at a time when many of the most popular poll winners, both male and female were covering, impersonating or heavily influenced by Black artists (Elvis Presley, Cliff Richard, Mick Jagger, The Beatles, Peggy Lee, Lulu, Four Seasons, Georgie Fame, no Black performers featured in the World Male Singer poll of 25 singers. Two Black female singers are included in the 20 Top World Female Singers (Shirley Bassey and Dionne Warwick) (*NME* Poll winners supplement, 10 December, 1965)





14. Aretha Franklin, album cover, *Aretha: Lady Soul*, 1968, Atlantic.



specific audiences in an historical, social and cultural framework. In the case of music produced by Motown performers and by Dusty herself in the 1960s and the ambiguity of the performers ethnicity and gender is frequently highlighted in listeners' accounts, as in Reeves' own mis-hearing of Dusty's voice. Motown set a popular precedent for forms of feminine excess in musical performances of soul by men and women and such a form, coupled with the emotional excess associated with it have allowed for a spectrum of identifications that fulfil the ideal criteria for pleasure.

Over and above her admiration of and friendship with Motown stars, Dusty fostered an identification with the Black soul star Aretha Franklin.<sup>112</sup> Dusty's respect for Franklin's musicality can be understood as typifying the mechanisms of projection and introjection in that it was "*both satisfying and frustrating*" (Stacey, 1994, p.229). Franklin appears to have been emblematic of the 'external ideal' devoid of negative qualities "*The sum of the good objects felt to be lacking in the self*" (ibid. p. 230)<sup>113</sup> O'Brien and Wexler have noted the importance her introjection/projection of the star was in her creative work more generally.<sup>114</sup> On the occasion of recording *Dusty in Memphis*, the banality of the studio environment, in a run-down Black neighbourhood was subsumed by the knowledge of the iconic star's precedence (O'Brien, 1999, p. 121) According to Wexler "*One of her major problems was in comparing herself to Aretha Franklin. It was a common failing among white female singers to set up Aretha as their bench mark*" (Wexler cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 125).<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Franklin's *Respect*, described by O'Brien as "*a classic of joyful self-determination*" has been interpreted as "*everything from anti-racist anthem to feminist call-to-arms*" (O'Brien, 1995, p. 89) Judith Butler used Franklin's performance of *Natural Woman* to demonstrate the potential plurality of interpretations of both the lyrical address and the signification of gender(s). Illustrating the unreliability of fixed notions of gender difference, Butler states "*Aretha sings, you make me feel like a natural woman, suggesting that this is a kind of metaphorical substitution, an act of imposture, a kind of sublime and momentary participation in an ontological illusion produced by the mundane operation of heterosexual drag.*

*But what if Aretha were singing to me? Or what if she were singing to a drag queen whose performance somehow confirmed her own?*" (Butler, 1991, p. 29). Butler leaves scope for further interrogation in terms of notions of natural and excessive femininity. Franklin, indubitably a model of fashioned excess for Dusty, was at her most ornate on the release of *Aretha: Lady Soul*, in 1968, the album on which *Natural Woman* features.

<sup>113</sup> *Son of a Preacher Man*, Dusty's biggest hit from *Dusty in Memphis* had originally been offered to Franklin but she had rejected it according to Wexler "*because of the subject in the text*" (Pomphery, 1994). A year after Dusty made it a hit, Franklin asked Wexler to produce her version, and Dusty, in a poignant gesture of projection stated "*She did it the way I wish I'd done it. I now copy her phrasing*" (ibid.).

<sup>114</sup> Wexler, the producer of arguably Dusty's best regarded work, *Dusty in Memphis*, managed her notorious 'paralysis through fear' when first attempting to work in the studio in which Franklin had recorded germinal cuts, including *Natural Woman*.

<sup>115</sup> Mandy surprised me late in our interview stating that she had played sax in a Motown tribute band. She remembered her own satisfactions and frustrations with Franklin:

AP: And how would you describe her voice?

Mandy: Powerful, strong.

AP: And what did that make you feel, when you listened to Aretha?

Mandy: I'm going to learn this bloody sax if it kills me [Laughter] and, I wish could sing.



## Dusty's Black voice

No research participants had memories of Dusty voice passing as Black, yet the literature foregrounds issues of ethnicity and race in just this way, situating Dusty specifically in relation to Blackness or whiteness.<sup>116</sup> Wilmer suggests that Dusty was aspiring to Blackness:

Gospel music did not have the same popular appeal for whites as the blues, despite the fact that many white singers were trying their damndest to sound as though they had been raised on the moaners' bench. One of those who admitted to damaging her voice trying to get a 'black' sound was Dusty Springfield, one of the most popular solo singers of the day. Dusty sang songs such as *Can I get a witness?* nominally copied from Motown's Marvin Gaye yet echoing an age-old cry that that went back to the beginnings of Afro-America... (Wilmer, 1989, p. 116)

However, research participants' memories are of the transmission of an emotional intensity as yet unheard of outside the otherworldliness of Black performances. In his germinal text *Music for Pleasure*, Frith asserted that music is "*the rawest form of personal expression*" and endorses the link between 'raw' and 'Black' by adding ("*- which is why I love soul music*") (Frith, 1989, p. 11).<sup>117</sup> Blackness/femininity/emotion are typically conflated in accounts of Dusty and her work. For example Dave Clark stated that "*She was the most underrated white singer in the UK, I don't think people appreciated how good she was. She was a white lady who should have been black. She had black mascara and a black soul... she felt every moment and had tremendous emotional range*" (Clark cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 97).<sup>118</sup> Her efforts to replicate the impact of The Exciters' 'attack' was not without risk. The performance of such a relatively intense raced musical form was perceived as both radical and dangerous in the hands of white women. According to O'Brien "*Springfield suffered from being a*

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<sup>116</sup> Wexler dubbed her (after the recording of *Dusty in Memphis*) the 'Great White Lady' (O'Brien, 1999, p. 127). After the recording of *A Brand New Me* in 1970 she was awarded the dubious title of 'blue-eyed soul singer' "*a pigeon-hole term coined in 1969 which stuck*" (O'Brien, 1995, p. 64). In 1983 Allan Andrews described her as, "*a female Caucasian Marvin Gaye*" (West Sound, Radio Scotland) Even in recent press coverage whiteness and Blackness are evoked e.g. "*The Husky Diva of White Soul*" (Evening Times, Glasgow, 3 March, 1999) This idea can be interpreted within the framework of raced and classed interpretations of emotional excess. Frith has noted that "*the pop critical rule of thumb has always been that black musicians are, by definition better, more authentic, more soulful, more expressive*" (Frith, 1988, p. 187).

<sup>117</sup> Arthur Jafa has called for further research into the specificities of 'enunciative desires' in Black popular cultural forms: "*Black pleasure (not joy)- what are its parameters, what are its primal sites, how does black popular culture or Black culture in general address black pleasure? How do these strategies in Black music play out the rupture and repair of African-America lie on the structural level? ... How can we interrogate the medium to find a way Black movement in itself could carry, for example, the weight of sheer tonality in Black song? And I'm not talking about the lyrics that Aretha Franklin sang, I'm talking about how she sang them*" (Jafa, 1992, p. 235).

<sup>118</sup> Such emotional extravagance is historically linked to the performances of Black stars and was indisputably appealing for Dusty and many other British performers from the 1950s on. Dusty articulated the way emotion, meaning and sound had a pleasurable impact on her by connecting it to her own ethnicity: "*A good love song has to make me cry [...] There's a connection between the pit of my stomach and my eyes. That's the Irish melancholy in me. A song has to be immediate it cannot grow on me. Once it sends a message to my tear ducts, then it's right*" (ibid. p. 251). Dusty cites a specific example in an interview from 1964 "*I watched Dionne Warwick at the Olympia in Paris. She sang 'Anyone who had a heart' and it was marvellous. I couldn't stop the tears. It was the song, yes- I think it's a great song. But the performance too*" (Jones, 1964).



*trailblazer, trying to articulate R&B torch songs in an era when white girls were not supposed to express raw black emotion*" (ibid. p. 38).

The analogy of female independence, perceived by both liberationists and misogynists to be embodied in the voice and performance of African American women, is suggested in accounts by her contemporaries and other commentators.<sup>119</sup>

Although the term 'Black' is used frequently by Black and white contemporaries and critics, this essentialist conceptualisation is metonymic for the emotional investment that has been identified by fans and critics alike in Dusty's voice. For Black artists such as Reeves, Dusty's voice was mistaken for Black:

When I heard her on the radio before we met, I just assumed she was American and black...Motown signed up nearly all the best new talent at that time, and I remember being a little surprised to find she was with a different label - and I was absolutely astounded when I finally saw her on TV (Reeves cited in O'Brien, 1999, p.59).<sup>120</sup>

Dusty's critics have interpreted her as inauthentically aping Black American artists. Such readings were arguably preferable to the notion of accepting a new, raw form of British femininity capable of engendering the responses from research participants in this study.<sup>121</sup> Black artists themselves continued to be conspicuously subordinated in many musical fields and identification with Black American forms entailed professional risk-taking, at least for women.<sup>122</sup> The racism of the Anglo- American music industry, and the relative risks to white stars who were read as its exponents and interpreters is unequivocally remembered and evoked by soul connoisseur Godin "[DJ's and record

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<sup>119</sup> American A&R man Shelvy Singleton, stated that at the outset she was committed to R&B: "*I thought she had the most unusual sound of the three people in the group [The Springfields] [...] She was doing country and western, which was something she didn't want to do. She had become more 'black' with her voice, and she felt restricted within the group.*" (Singleton cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 37) "*after leaving the Springfield's Dusty became more black with her voice [...] she wanted to do more soul.*" (ibid. p. 53)

Although Tom Springfield is read by some commentators as anticipating world music in his eclectic song-writing and arranging the superficiality of his identifications at this time are apparent in his interview with *Disc* in July 1963: "*for instance, instead of getting the middle eight, Dusty comes in all over the place. I play a 12-string guitar for the intro and Mike gets a guitar solo. Then we have a girlie chorus, making squeaky Negro-type noises. And if you think it is still too different when you hear it then just be glad that each of the trio hasn't got his or her own way completely! For Tom would like to do a Latin American album, Dusty has her heart set on out and out gospel and Mike would like to record a Johnny Cash type C & W set*" (Harris, 1963).

<sup>120</sup> In 1965 Dusty, commenting on the appeal of gospel music reveals that her identifications and pleasures were indeed centred on non-British, non-white forms of sound and performance, rather than specific notions of Blackness: "*I find it very stimulating to listen to. It's very exciting music when it first starts up, a gospel piano and organ going into something and then a tambourine. It has much the same effect on me as, say, Latin American sound suddenly bursting in, or a flamenco sound*" (Melody Maker, 1965)

<sup>121</sup> Criticisms of white, British, male appropriations of Black, American music, for example, The Beatles or The Rolling Stones are occasionally articulated, but whereas the Black roots of Jagger and Lennon's music are cited as an early appropriation/appreciation that was a significant mining of Black sources where whiteness was never in jeopardy, Dusty's links to Blackness are persistently troubling.

<sup>122</sup> *Dusty in Memphis* was the first of her LPs not to chart in the UK, being, according to Simon Price "*too earthy for British tastes*" (Price, Uncut cited in Bulletin, no 36).



management] *just couldn't understand why a nice white girl should want to sing like a nigger woman*" (Godin cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 144). Wickham has offered more subtle and yet no less problematic interpretations of Dusty's fascination and absorption in the music that was identified with Black artists: *"The powers that be hadn't heard of Motown and weren't interested. Dusty had a positive enthusiasm for the music. At the same time she didn't pretend she was the bone fide article. She acknowledged her roots, and often said that she wished she'd been born black"* (O'Brien, 1999, p. 60).<sup>123</sup> Such comments could be read as reflective of both the specificity of forms of positive expressions of self open to white women keen to disrupt the narrow confines of British femininity and the naively optimistic aims of both Dusty and her Black counterparts towards reciprocal cross-ethnic identifications. For some critics, Dusty's Black-inspired, emotionally charged performances separate themselves off from commonplace exploitative representations by white performers.<sup>124</sup>

The appeal of sound for specific listeners can be understood as both personal and collective, meaningful for specific listeners in an historical, social and cultural framework. In the case of music produced by Motown performers and by Dusty herself in Britain and America in the 1960s, the ambiguity of the performers ethnicity and gender is frequently highlighted in the literature and in listeners' accounts.<sup>125</sup>

Motown set a mainstream precedent for forms of feminine excess in musical performances of soul by men and women. These forms, coupled with the emotional excess associated with it have allowed for a spectrum of identifications that fulfil the ideal criteria for pleasure that Frith has summarised *"The best records (the ones that give most pleasure) are the ones that allow an ambiguity of response, letting us be both subject and object of the singers' needs (regardless of our or their gender)."* (Frith, 1989, p. 167).

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<sup>123</sup> This seems to be born out in contemporary interviews for example with Peter Jones in 1964: *"The sort of music I like is gospelly music, sung by coloured artists... That's fine but then people started saying I sounded as if I was coloured. I think Cliff Richard said I was 'A white negress'... again that's fine. But the important word is White not Negress. .. No matter what people think I don't sound coloured, I'd like to. Often I try to.... To be honest I'm still looking for the real me. I know what I like and what I want to do. But it takes time to settle in - to be yourself instead of trying to follow other styles and other artists... I'm misquoted- maybe it's my fault. But I never said I am rhythm and blues. I like it sure. People like Martha Reeves and the Vandellas - they must make it big in Britain soon. I'm just seeking right now. But you can't expect white people to sing like the coloured stars"* (Jones, 1964).

<sup>124</sup> *"She wasn't indulging herself in sub-Al Jolson routines like other sixties wannabees. She understood that soul was more than putting on a rasp and sounding like LaVerne Baker"* (Shaar Murray quoted in O'Brien, 1999, p. 248). Tom Dowd, a session musician who worked with her in Memphis has also acknowledged the seriousness of her intent *"I recognised in her a deep jazz root. She was a fanatical jazz impressionist. When she told me Blossom Dearie was one of her heroines, I realised that she had obscure, avant-garde genius as her goal"* (O'Brien, 1999, p. 124).

<sup>125</sup> As late as 1971, the release of Dusty's 'bluesy ballad' singles *Haunted* and *I Believe in You* were considered *"too soulful for a white audience, and not black enough for the black radio stations"* Neither made the charts (O'Brien, 1999, p. 144). Wexler accords Dusty a measure of creative autonomy distinct from race that comes close to reflecting the accounts of identification and transformation by participants in this study: *"With Dusty there were no traces of black in her singing, she's not mimetic. Whatever she gets from black she transmogrifies with her own sensibility. She has a pure silvery stream, she's a genuine original"* (Wexler in O'Brien, 1999, p. 125).



## Episodes of sororial cross-ethnic identifications

Research participants discussed identifications with and feelings about stars in ways that cannot be easily reduced to categories of whiteness and Blackness, or racist appropriation. Similarly, the accounts of Early Mod Dusty, her own memories of this period and those of Black stars such as Reeves suggest an unprecedented context where cross-ethnic identifications between women were not only possible but were enacted. Dusty appeared on *Dick Clark's Coast to Coast American Bandstand* in 1964 and in the summer of the same year she performed for the first time with the Black American R&B artists she admired, at Murray Kaufman's show in New York's 5000-seater Fox stadium doing shows with the Ronettes, the Contours, Little Anthony and the Imperials and Motown acts such as the Supremes and the Temptations to mixed audiences. According to O'Brien, Dusty was aware of the potential problems surrounding her whiteness on a predominately Black bill, however, O'Brien's interpretations and Dusty's iconic memories of the feminised space of the dressing-room are strikingly poignant accounts of intimacies between femininities.<sup>126</sup> Dusty was close to Shirley Alston of the Shirelles and, back in Britain, attempted to recreate this productive, sororial atmosphere in her work with the American ex-pat backing singers Madeline Bell, P.P. (Pat) Arnold and gospel singer Doris Troy.<sup>127</sup> Dusty's first experience of anonymously backing Black stars is remembered by her as a treasured memory above all others:

The best thing about the Fox Motown revue was that the Vandellas did the back-up for Marvin Gaye from the wings and on the first show [of the day] there was always one who'd overslept so I got to be the 3rd Vandella and to this day that is the biggest thrill of my life (Pomfrey, 1994 ).

Soul star Reeves, who saw Dusty as "*the champion of PR for soul label...the one who can be credited with breaking Motown in Britain*" (ibid.) remembered their contact in ways that evoke the

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<sup>126</sup> "She would squeeze up in the tiny dressing room with the Ronettes, swapping stories and make-up hints. 'It was hot like, 104 degrees and all our beehives were in there - three black beehives and one white one.... Next door were Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, and on the other side were the Supremes'. Diana Ross's mother hemmed Dusty's dresses for her, while Smoky Robinson's wife Claudette, would cook dinner for everyone on the top floor of the building" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 56)

<sup>127</sup> The year after the Fox performances, Dusty paid for Reeves to accompany her and Bell on a trip to Rio. Valentine and Wickham recall a treasured memory from this time: "Dusty always remembered not just the brilliance of carnival but the time she, Martha and Madeline climbed up to the famous statue of Jesus that towers over Rio. Despite the heat, none of the women went 'au naturel' with their hair in Rio. For Martha and Madeline it was part and parcel of being a black singer in the 1960s, before *Black Pride* said you didn't have to wear straight wigs like white women's hair. For Dusty it was probably more a case of wanting to look her glamorous best to herself, or indeed a passing fan or photographer. So there they were, a white girl and two black girls under the outstretched arms of the Lord, all wearing scarves so that their wigs wouldn't fly off" (Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 68).

For Dusty, this combo constituted a groundbreaking opportunity for collaboration with African American performers. Bell stated that when she came to Britain in 1963 there were only two or three Black singers in Britain, and they sang jazz. Bell, Arnold and Troy certainly contributed to the impact of Dusty's material: "*Their powerful voices plumped up her sound and gave her the edge over her competitors. She learnt a lot from them and repaid the compliment by recording backing vocals for them under the pseudonym, Gladys Thong*" (O'Brien, 1999, p. 206).



positive cross-ethnic identifications that are a contextual underpinning for this chapter.<sup>128</sup> The pleasures and fashioning practices of Black stars and fans of music in America and Britain is certainly an under researched but critically important source of knowledge on cross-ethnic identifications. Accounts by stars and fans reveal identifications of forms of pleasurable and empowering sounds. The importance of the success of Black music in this period in providing figures of positive identification for African Americans models of Black entrepreneurship and civil rights activism has been well documented, as has the impact Motown and Stax had on the formation of male Mod identity but little has been written about the individual and collective pleasurable identifications British women fans and stars such as Dusty undeniably experienced on hearing and performing soul music. For the Black, American born Mod queen, P.P. Arnold, Dusty “*was the soul singer. Out of all the girls – Lulu, Cilla and all of that – it was Dusty doin’ it for me. She made me feel it*” (O’ Brien, 1999, p. 44).<sup>129</sup>

### Feminist ambivalence to (Dusty’s) performances of excess

In line with much British and American Second-Wave feminist theory and activism, publications such as *Spare Rib* disdained fashioning outside narrowly defined tastes.<sup>130</sup> The editorial style (un)consciously produced a pro- rock and anti-pop stance reflective of a broader alignment with the middle class, predominantly white tastes of its collectives, at least in the first five years or so of its run. A strident anti- feminine excess rhetoric was sustained until late into the 1970s, the first decade of its publication. In 1975, Liz Waugh and Terri Goddard critiqued the sexist-orientated lyrics of contemporary music, unproblematically indicting soul as the principle motor for sustaining the ‘cult of femininity’ through promotion of romance and the use of sexist lyrics. In contrast, and in one of several

<sup>128</sup> In a tribute programme produced for BBC Radio 4, Reeves discussed the reciprocity of their friendship: “*Dusty and I shared things and when the second take of Dancin’ in the streets was a ‘keep’ I ran to Dusty with it. I got really elated when I could play her the acetate*” (ibid.) Dusty remembered this occasion, whilst she shared a dressing room with Reeves and of them “*playing the record three times in a row and dancing all over the place - it was the epitome to me of the best record of the time*” (ibid.). Dusty and Reeves’ friendship is remembered by both in forms of intimacies between femininities and in memories that contradict the formularised reading of the white stars inauthentic aping and exploitation of Black performers and point to a reciprocity of pleasures in the voice: “*Dusty was always in the wings because I think she liked our music and the reverse, I was always in the wings because I liked her music and we’d sing back-up on [Dusty’s] Wishin’ and hopin’*” (ibid.).

Although Dusty had anxieties about her whiteness before first performing with the Motown Revue at the Apollo she was, according to music journalist Simon Price “*totally accepted by black audiences*” (Price, cited in the *Dusty Bulletin*, review featured in *Uncut*). In contrast to Dionne Warwick’s annoyance at Cilla Black’s poaching of her Bacarach hits, Warwick praised Dusty’s sound: “*I though she had a wonderful quality to her voice, you know there are certain voices that you latch onto immediately*” (ibid.).

<sup>129</sup> O’Brien has noted that Dusty had become by the 1960s an exponent of a form of musical excess called the Vamp. P.P. Arnold’s definition states that “*Everything from sixties R&B to house and garage in the nineties that’s just gospel, that’s just the Church, we call it the Vamp. In gospel music when you sing the song you sing the verse, repeat the song, then move into the chorus, which is the hook, the groove. Then when you get to the end of the song, all hell breaks loose*” (O’Brien, 1999, p. 45). Franklin was taught the expression “*Girl you pee’d tonight*” from Jackie Verdell of the Davis Sisters, something Franklin admits to literally experiencing when doing the Vamp in her early career (Franklin and Ritz, 1999, p. 51).

<sup>130</sup> Whilst discrete utopian forms of feminist femininity were uncritically endorsed, indeed modelled in each issue by editorial staff, cover stars, and in sanctioned advertisements for music by women, female stars that unequivocally performed feminine excess were “*identified with particular commodities which are part of the reproduction of feminine identities*” (Stacey, 1994, p. 160).



significant apologist reviews in *Spare Rib* of The Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger is regarded as 'a special case'. Jagger's rock penchant for misogynistic lyrics is acknowledged but clearly less problematic than Marvin Gaye's.<sup>131</sup> In 1973, Margaret Geddes unequivocally appraised the Stones as holding a fascination for *Spare Rib* readers in her article 'Roll over and rock me baby' (Geddes, 1973, pp. 6-8). Interestingly, in the light of contemporary debates including this one about women's identification with female stars, Geddes suggests that the Rolling Stones provided models of mimetic identification.<sup>132</sup>

The reason for Dusty's neglect by mainstream and feminist texts might be accounted for as forms of projection that railed against the political perils of encrusted femininity. Such projections allowed for other female stars such as Dusty, Shirley Bassey and Tammy Wynette to become emblematic for the *Spare Rib* collective of the success of patriarchal control of women.<sup>133</sup>

For connoisseurs Ellen and Claire, appreciation of country music is an activity associated with developing musical eclecticism in Stage Two. Claire learns the value of the country genre through Dusty and suggests she would otherwise not have ventured into this territory. For Ellen, who is at pains to differentiate the work of Emmylou Harris from more encrusted female stars, it is only through the model of Dolly Parton whose kitsch image is ironically 'loved' that the feminine excess associated with country can be consumed.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> And in a later article Waugh and Goddard stated "Jagger may be one of the most sexist lyricists around, but he's also one of the most brilliant. We don't intend to miss out on that combined with the best rock 'n' roll band in the world... Oh what a dilemma!" (Waugh and Goddard, 1975, p. 37).

<sup>132</sup> "The Stones appearance allowed for identification to the extent that other heroes did not. If you fancied Clint Eastwood from *Rawhide*, it is unlikely that you should attempt to look like him and identify closely with his actions, but not so the Stones." (Geddes, 1973, p. 7)

<sup>133</sup> The demonisation of stars by feminists that have simultaneously been adopted as gay icons is indicative of the dichotomy of femininity between these two political positions. In a typical collapsing of issues O'Brien has stated "D.I.V.O.R.C.E' pulsed with elements of high camp. 'Stand by your man' turned out to be the biggest-selling single ever recorded by a female country singer. Though it was snapped up by many young married women who found her sentiments rousing, her record also became a kind of alternative gay anthem" (O'Brien, 1995, p. 191). In the entire run of *Spare Rib* music texts appear in every issue in the form of features, reviews and adverts, frequently appearing on the inside or back pages. Men's as well as women's work is reviewed and advertised in the earlier issues including Van Morrison, David Bowie, the Rolling Stones, Roxy Music, Procul Harum, Jon Martyn, Chicago, Steve Miller, Rick Nelson, Alice Cooper, Alan Price, The New York Dolls, Lou Reed and Elvis. In issue 5 (1972) Carmel Koerber slates 'Songs for Women's Liberation' by Femme Records and applauds Jonathon King's *Bubble Rock Is Here To Stay* - if only perhaps because it included King's version of The Rolling Stones' *Satisfaction* which apparently could never be passed over by early *Spare Rib* collectives.

In her article 'Tammy Wynette: Peroxide Politics and the Counter Revolution' (Tyrell, 1975) Sue Tyrell indulged in a form of projection where Wynette became the repository for all the undesirable qualities rejected by the feminist collective self. No consideration is given to the possibility of pleasures women might have gained from forms of identifications with her Wynette is "...a figure-head of the counter-revolution, a glittering peroxide testament to White Womanhood and the homely virtues of the nuclear family. She is both a symbol and defender of the traditionally conservative Middle American way of Life, spearheading the inevitable backlash to the Women's Movement. The protest movement of the sixties used popular music as vehicle for conscious political comment, and now Nixon's Silent Majority is doing the same, and its voice is Tammy Wynette". Country music is grouped with other feminised fields of popular culture as illustrations of the perils of femininity: "The passive faithfulness, the mindless ecstasy over trivia that characterise the country music heroine are all too familiar to any reader of women's magazines - [...] Tammy Wynette and Billy Sherrill [record producer] [...] have distilled this image down into such a heady intoxicating brew. Women have suffered the onslaught of anti-feminist propaganda before [...] yet none of that had the emotional power of country music" (Tyrell, 1975).

<sup>134</sup> Parton, who has recently knowingly embraced her ironic following is distinguished from 'that whole country scene' by Ellen in terms that evoke the antipathy of *Spare Rib*:

Ellen: Yes, she's [Dolly Parton] manufactured herself [...] And I think that's a huge big difference, I mean coming from that whole country scene where most of the women are bashed, battered, taken for a ride and had money taken off them you know.



15. Feminist music icons:



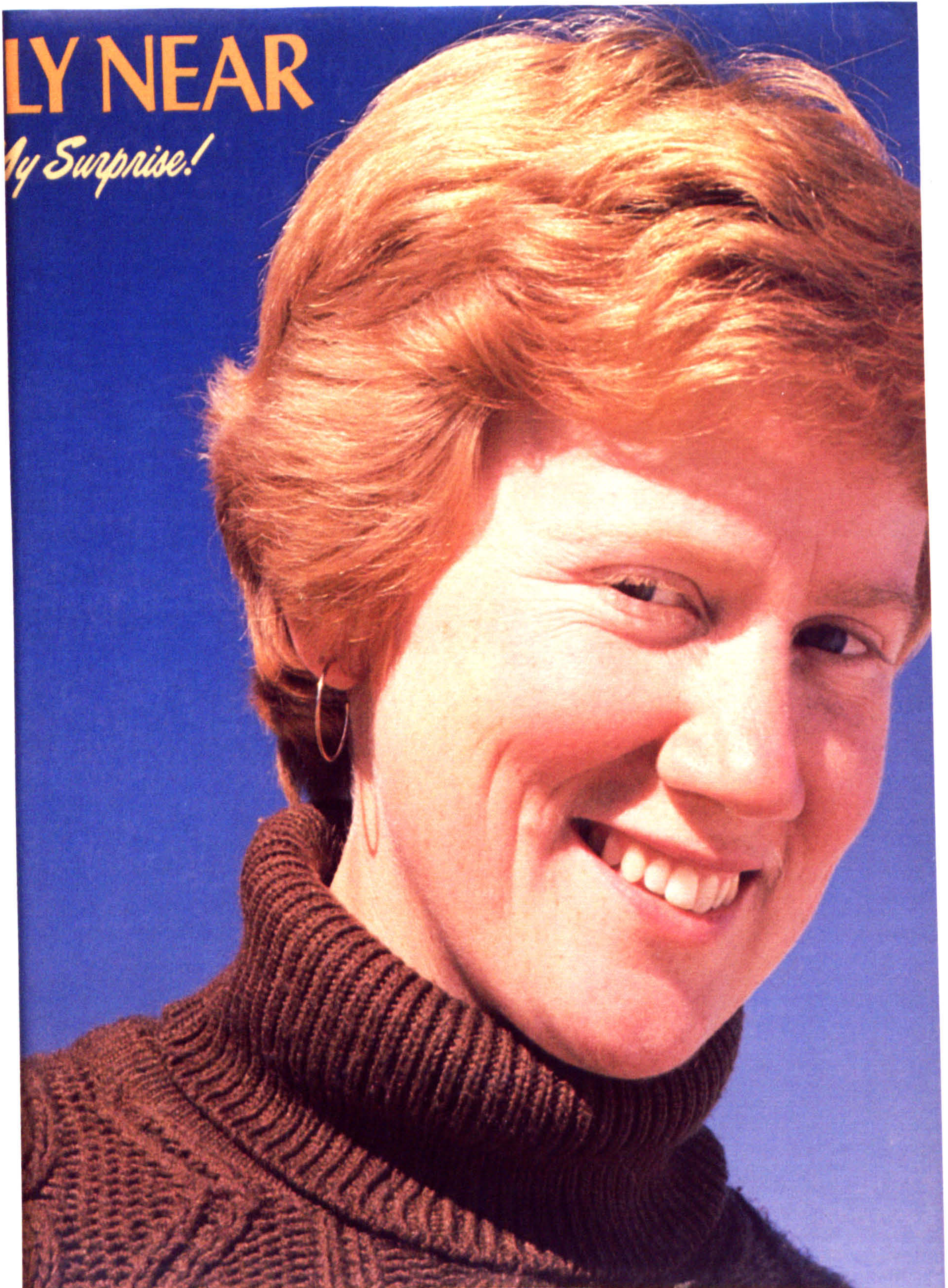
Meg Christian tour promoted in *Spare Rib*, Issue 93, April 1980, page 48.



Detail, album cover, *Margie Adam. Songwriter*. 1976, Pleiades Records.



16. Feminist music icons:



Holly Near, detail from album cover *Imagine my surprise!* 1978, Olivia Records.



The construction of natural femaleness construed to be embodied in British feminist music collectives and American stars from Holly Near, Meg Christian, Carly Simon and Rita Coolidge, that were promoted through *Spare Rib* are in contrast to the more glittering forms of femininity embodied by both black Motown / Philadelphia and white country music stars.<sup>135</sup>

*Spare Rib* failed to address the massive popularity of these other musical and fashioned forms amongst British women in the 1970s, when the magazine was at its most influential in determining the tastes of feminism.<sup>136</sup> Not only is Dusty's work and the trajectory of Black soul and gospel performers who inspired her neglected in early-second wave feminist music criticism, the historical appropriation by men of Black women's fashionings of feminine excess are underplayed or ignored.<sup>137</sup> The Rolling Stones style is privileged in both mainstream and feminist texts, over that of Black female stars, despite Jagger's own identification with Black stars such as Tina Turner. Appraisal of Dusty's work is virtually absent from *Spare Rib* apart from one occasion where Waugh and Goddard recruited Dusty as a parodied model of feminine excess:

It may not always work, but the Sexist Lyric Acid Test gives you a few laughs. I mean can you imagine... a tremulous young man dramatically declaiming (a la Dusty) 'You gotta chose the clothes you wear/Just for her/Do the things she likes to Do/Wear your hair/Just for her...'  
(Waugh and Goddard, 1975, p. 39).

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AP: So did you know about that when you were first, I mean, I suppose it's there in some of the lyrics, but were you aware of that aspect of the country thing?

Ellen: I think it might well have been that she was a sparky, spunky type and a lot of the other lyrics were - even Emmylou, I suppose a lot of her lyrics - her lyrics aren't exactly - women mistreated by men, they are really about women mistreated by life rather than being mistreated by a male or, or you know something bigger or stronger or something you can't get out of.

The appropriation of some of the more ornate country stars for camp is ubiquitous and reflected in mainstream and academic literature. For example, a recent review of Dolly Parton noted "*Trannies, grannies and ironic students wept like abandoned Kentucky babies*" (Dale, 2002, p. 12).

<sup>135</sup> Whereas the memories of pleasures in music possessed by spokespersons for feminism remain largely neglected or undisclosed, some maverick feminists including Greer and Paglia have not been afflicted by amnesia about their past pleasures and have revealed their tastes for ska and soul. Greer has stated that when she arrived in Britain in 1969 the only way she could get 'down and dirty' was by going to the ska club at the back of Liberty's in London where she used to enjoy dancing with 'big black bus drivers' (Greer, 2000). Paglia, in a moment of unadulterated projection has stated "*I have a dream: in my dream, based on the diner episode in the Blues Brothers, Aretha Franklin in her fabulous black-lipstick Jumpin' Jack Flash outfit, leaps from her seat at Maxim's and, shouting 'Think!', blasts Lacan, Derrida and Foucault like dishrags against the wall, then leads thousands of freed academic white slaves in a victory parade down the Champs Elysees*" (Paglia, 1992, p. 219).

<sup>136</sup> This minimising of or amnesia concerning the impact of popular black stars historically is frequently reflected in mainstream media. In a recent feature on The Donnas - heralded as the girl group of the noughties. *The Guardian* magazine summarised female stars and girl groups of the decades from the 1940s to the 1990s - thus: The Andrews Sisters, 1940's; Patsy Cline, 1950s; Janis Joplin, 1960s; Donna Summer, 1970s; Madonna, 1980s; Britney Spears, 1990s (Williams, 2001).

<sup>137</sup> One rather sad, lukewarm review appeared when Dusty was attempting to revive her career again in April, 1978. In the case of Mick Jagger, and in articles that look specifically at forms of identification such as Geddes' cited above, the privileging of bourgeois, white male rock over forms of music and performance by black men and women is apparent. According to Marianne Faithfull: "*Mick was fascinated with the way Tina Turner moved on the stage. He studied her every gesture, her every move, all the nuances of her performance. And when he got back to his room, he would practice what he had seen in front of the mirror, endlessly dancing, gesturing, watching himself, moving his body rhythmically, the way Tina did. What seemed spontaneous on stage was really carefully rehearsed and plotted in front of the mirror*" (Faithfull cited in Whiteley, 1997).



The ironic subtleties of Dusty's own parodic, lesbian voice as heard in her cover, or rather appropriation of, Gene Pitney's libidinous *Twenty-four hours from Tulsa* are passed over in favour of a reading of Dusty as a straightforward model of false consciousness, in particular the proto-feminist achievements of Dusty are veiled by the inappropriateness of her fashioning of femininity.<sup>138</sup>

The methods of the germinal all-woman, feminist band the Stepney Sisters interviewed in May 1976, in *Spare Rib*, can be compared here to Dusty's interpretation of her role as popular performer. Interviewer Marion Fudger asks Stepney Sister Ruthie:

Have you ever thought to take your music into more working-class situations?

Ruthie: Well we've had discussions about playing in ordinary pubs where anybody will go, or trade unions where we'd be playing to a more working-class audience. Perhaps our gigs are rather exclusive in the sense that we play in middle-class places. One idea was that if we made a record, we'd be able to reach a much wider audience, like women trapped in the home, listening to the radio.

In contrast, Lucy O'Brien noted,

Her [Dusty's] biggest contingent of fans came from the North of England where she attracted a large, working-class audience. She later remembered one date in Yorkshire where a young mum caught her eye. 'There she was with her scampi and chips, and I could tell she was enjoying my songs so much. Overworked as she was, swollen ankles and all, I was her big night out. That's why I used to go out and do it ( O'Brien, 1999, p. 85).<sup>139</sup>

Reviewing her performance in a Blackburn club in the early 1970s Marcelle Bernstein noted the almost inexpressible intimacies between Dusty and her audience: "*It's not just the false nails that*

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<sup>138</sup> *Rib's* perspective ignored the fact that, according to Valentine, Dusty's *Breakfast in bed* was practically, "a lesbian anthem" (Valentine, 1999, p. 18).

<sup>139</sup> Although a more in depth analysis of the tastes of feminist music criticism is required, the absence of soul music in reviews, features and advertising in *Spare Ribs* entire run is cause for criticism given the pleasures women have derived in it over the specific timeframe marked by its publication. Black female performers are included in articles and reviews but the white rock and folk artists (with by no means explicit feminist repertoires) arguably consumed by predominantly middle-class audiences predominate. Carly Simon, Dory Previn, Judy Collins, Yoko Ono, Marsha Hunt, Liza Minnelli, Carole King, Fanny, Rita Coolidge, Linda Lewis, Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Shusha (singing 'Raleigh, Shakespeare, Blake and her own songs' (*Spare Rib*, 23), Melanie, Grace Slick, Joan Armatrading, Joan Baez, Alma Mahler, Elkie Brooks, Carla Bley, Patti Smith, Bonnie Raitt, Emmylou Harris, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, Rock Follies (album of hit TV show) Janis Ian and Peggy Seeger were all featured in articles, advertising or reviews.



*extend her fingers but the almost-love, the rapport between watchers and watched, audience and star"*  
(Bernstein cited in Valentine and Wickham, 2000, p. 135).

Participants' accounts and the fashioning/construction of Dusty and other music stars who express to excess can be said to have mobilised forms of creativity through and into intimacies between femininities, producing treasured, iconic and self-narrativised memories of often ineffable emotions and experiences neglected or disdained in both feminist and mainstream criticism. In subsequent chapters I discuss how cross-class identifications are also articulated through fashioning forms of femininity. Dusty commented self-reflexively on how her own middle-class status could inhibit her and had to be consciously transcended in specific forms of performance:

When you are middle class you always wonder what people will think or say if you do something different - like standing in front of a thousand people and singing of love and romance...If you are working class you don't think like that, because you are out to prove something to the world. (Springfield cited in O'Brien, 1999, p. 29).

This chapter introduced an individual and collective iconic image/text of feminine excess in the form of 'Dusty'. The specificities of British post-war working class cultures and dispositions, for example, the development of cross-cultural identifications and the burgeoning of lesbian identifications are raised in relation to historical and social change and participants' testimonies. I also address some central aims and key themes of the research. The dissidence of Dusty (and Dustified fashionings) are discussed in relation to issues of sexuality, transformation into fashioned forms that contradicted contemporary notions of respectability, desirable modernity, fashion and taste and later feminist fashioning orthodoxies. The pleasures of participants in Dusty on a range of (extra) musical registers is charted including lyrical and emotional address, gestures, fashioning, nostalgia, mimicking and self-narrativisation. These identifications that form aspects of intimacies between femininities discussed throughout the thesis, occur here between Dusty and Black soul and white Hollywood stars, in the identifications and relationships that arise in the processes of 'fan' consumption, lesbian identifications and so forth. Finally, the theme of disdain, discussed further in subsequent chapters is introduced in my interpretation of how Dusty's excesses (and those of Black soul stars) have been and are perceived through the lens of the hegemonic post-war Rock ideology and, from the late 1970s on, the polarised perspectives of camp and feminist taste. The next chapter moves the discussion of fashioning



femininity from Dusty, a collective, iconic figure of excess through to participant's own fashioning experiences where the meaningfulness of hair in their respective histories of self-fashioning is defined.



## 5 Fashioning Hair

### 5.1 Introduction

In effect, womanhood itself, as much as female beauty is created through hairstyling (Gimlin, 1996, p. 512).

The focus of this chapter is research participants' accounts of their hair fashioning histories.<sup>1</sup> The impetus to draw this material into a dedicated chapter, a pivotal one for this project, arose through the volume of meaningful data collected, some of which I argue offers feminist insights.<sup>2</sup> I have attempted to cluster accounts in thematic sections although some overlap or cross-correlate. Although my principle aim is to present participants' perspectives on hair I have included at intervals, as below, some secondary sources where these help to illuminate cultural or historical contexts.

Before 1914 European middle-class women had their hair dressed by a ladies' maid. In France bourgeois women might have called on the service of a *coiffure* for special occasions that would have made home visits.<sup>3</sup> The memories of the research participants span the greater part of the period from the inception of hairdressing salons in the early part of the twentieth century. The growth of the fields of fashion/ing from this period to the present has been identified by many commentators as articulating and mirroring broader significant cultural, political, sociological and historical changes (Gaines and Herzog, 1990; Barnard, 1992; Buckley and Fawcett, 2002).<sup>4</sup> Historical accounts of British hair fashioning comprise a history largely of middle-class women's tastes, including sumptuary legislation which, inevitably, impugns women as vain and details excesses rather than experiences. The literature fails to adequately chart the self-fashioning of working-class women.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In some instances, I approached participants with this aim in mind for example, in salon visits; in others, the subject of hair arose in discussions about broader fashioning regimes and related topics.

<sup>2</sup> This is the term I use to describe moments in the research where participants produce knowledge that I regard as directly relevant or new to feminism.

Many participants claimed that hair had an outstanding significance to them in relation to their understanding of both femininity and feminism. For example, speaking of the idealised image of long, thick hair that Elizabeth desired as a girl in the 1950s, a look she associated with Brigitte Bardot and Grammar School girls she stated "*And it rep- and to me that's what it took to be feminine [...] Even much more than say, large breasts or you know, it was definitely the hair and I know I did feel terribly unfeminine because - I always say my life would have been totally different if I'd had different - a different kind of hair, and I'm absolutely convinced that that was the case*".

<sup>3</sup> This system accounts for the scarcity of *salons pour dames* before 1914 (Zdatny, 1997, p. 37). Salons, located in the new department stores, were first frequented by women living in British urban centres in the late nineteenth century (Cox, 1999, p. 7). Although ornate hairstylings had once been a status symbol for both sexes, it was also at this point that the notion of highly fashioned or decorative hairdressing was gendered as *feminine* (ibid. p. 15).

<sup>4</sup> Cox has demonstrated that even before the development of urban hairdressing salons and Academies of Hairdressing, hair carried social signification, for example, from the 1820s to the 1920s "*a fabulously coiffured wife signified that all was well in the male world of work*" (Cox, 1999, p. 7).

<sup>5</sup> Exceptions include records of the ongoing sale by poor and ethnic minority women of their hair for the *postiches* industry, the shaving of institutionalised and working women's heads as a result of scalp diseases, imprisonment or similar forms of incarceration and efforts to distinguish prostitutes from other women. For example, Nield records that in the eighteenth century,





17. Fantasy fashioning contexts: Margaret Lockwood and her daughter Toots in a theatre dressing room, illustration in *Girl film and television annual*, 1957, page 47.



Elsa Martinelli in *The VIP's*, 1963, still in *ABC Film annual*, 1964, unpaginated.



## 5.2 Fashioning contexts and cultures

### Grooming and fashioning contexts

Many participants' earliest or most treasured memories of (self-)fashioning described environments that ran counter to twentieth and twenty-first century Western notions of glamour in literary influenced Hollywood or advertising industries.<sup>6</sup> Some accounts, such as those of Jean's of her own and her mother's fashioning in the 1950s and 1960s suggested how such activities could be absolutely imbricated into daily life and associated with banal but significant, sometimes treasured objects:

She [her mother] used to sit me up on the washboard in the kitchen and she used to brush and brush with this Betterware brush. I still remember that. I still have that brush and it was pink and it said Betterware and it was kind of like that [gestures the shape of the brush] with the wee bristles all going round about. I had it from a baby. She brushed and brushed before going to school in the morning.

Fashioning was undertaken in places and spaces that were commandeered and adapted rather than designed for fashioning. Janey had fond memories of satisfactorily home-perming her female relatives:

AP: Whereabouts in the house?

Janey: Well, we only had two rooms, what we called a room and kitchen and the bathroom had no wash hand basin or anything in it so we'd just to do it in the sink. And that was it.

Jean: There was a kitchen mirror and I remember just as you went in the kitchen door, between the door and there was a coal cupboard we had between - there was a kind of big mirror my dad had put up there and because the light came in at our back door it would hit the mirror so she could see herself and she would put all her make-up on the kitchen table and she'd be there for,

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prostitutes were required to wear "*a striking head dress of saffron as a mark of their profession*" (Nield, 1973 p. 220). Sarah Waters depicted a hair-cutting initiation and the profits for warders from hair shorn from a Roma inmate in her Victorian women's prison –based novel *Affinity* (Waters, 1999, p. 8-80).

<sup>6</sup> For example 'the *boudoir*', 'the *toilette*', 'the dressing room' and the 'dressing table', evocative, glamorous objects, environments and associated activities epitomised in the film *Rebecca* (Hitchcock, 1940) or in promotional photographs for example, Margaret Lockwood and daughter illustrated opposite.



it seemed like ever, you know putting on all this make-up on and it had to just be right you know, before she would go out.

Both Jean and Elizabeth, were warned as girls against vanity, nevertheless, Elizabeth experimented with grooming in the privacy of her bedroom from the 1950s:

I mean, it was very much you know, like doing it yourself kind of thing and very much in secrecy [...] I did bouffant my hair - learnt how to bouffant and I did - and that was when bouffant hairstyles were very much in vogue and there was a sudden development in like, home hairdressing with rollers, heated rollers and that sort of thing.

Michelle's description of her weekend fashioning regime contrasted markedly with Elizabeth's that had taken place some fifty years earlier in the volume of fashioning activities, array of equipment and her confidence in fashioning techniques.<sup>7</sup> In some accounts, the boundaries between private and public, domestic and commercial fashioning environments were redefined. Gabrielle and Ettie described occasions when hairdressers made home visits sometimes after long shifts at a salon. Ettie's ingenuity was required when, as a young married mother, she needed to be able to earn money at home:

When I was expecting Anthony, at that point I worked a Friday and Saturday and did hairdressing at home, made a wee salon, I had put an extension onto the house at that point and there was a wee salon, started off working in the living room, didn't even have a dryer but had a fan heater and I cut the shape of a design around it - I cut a cardboard box at that side and a place at the back for the dryer to blow into so I created my own hairdryer because I couldn't have afforded - hand dryers were no use because I had to get onto my other lady, so I devised a way where the back of the box -

AP: That's ingenious!

Ettie: - the front of the box was that for her head, right, and the back of the box was like that [indicates a hole] for the dryer, it was either that or stick her head in the oven - [Laughter]

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<sup>7</sup> Frequently involving as it did "*trying on twenty different outfits*" and taking place in "*Bedroom, hall, living-room, every room with a mirror in it basically, aye*".



18. Salon interiors, fashioning environments: La Paris



Hair treatment preparation.



Reception, hair treatment and refreshment preparation area.



Customers under dryers and Marilyn Monroe poster.



Façade.





19. Salon ergonometics, 'La Paris'.



For some participants, salon visits as a child from the 1950s and 1960s were remembered as occasions engendering fear. None described the salon interior as glamorous in ambience, furnishings, staff or clientele:<sup>8</sup>

Jean: I was scared, and I tell you the reason I was scared, I was scared of the hairdryers because they were a sort of dome-shaped, not a dome-shape but they were a sort of cone-shaped and I was frightened that the dome would go over my head and suffocate me and nobody knew what - the fear was so - eventually my mother took me out and I cried all the way along Argyle Street.

Elizabeth's memories of accompanying her mother and grandmother to the hairdressers for their perms date from when she was three and a half years old in 1940: "*Well, it was the time of these absolutely enormous dryers, so I remember, that's all I remember really, women, say, under those enormous dryers, it was very small hairdressers but I think - [...] - I think most of all what I remember was the smell and it was a very, very strange place*". Ettie's perspective as a hairdresser in a working-class women's salon in the 1960s in Glasgow underscores this impression:

AP: And how would you describe 'Betty's'?

Ettie: Wee, scruffy salon where they made their own lacquer from shellac and spirit -

AP: Did they? Goodness me.

Ettie: You washed the windows, you did the laundry, this is going back to the beginning where there were electric, horrible, burny perms, it wasn't just curls you bought, you had lacerations.

AP: And what were the customers like in there, do you remember much about -?

Ettie: Good, hard working, ordinary women and this was a big treat, getting their hair done, much more like a torture chamber. [Laughter]

As a rule, the interior furnishings of salons where many women spent long hours each weekend were barely remembered apart from the processing apparatus even defying Jean's formidable powers of recall:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Unlike the allure and 'escapist pleasures' of for, example, cinema interiors (Stacey, 1994, p. 95).

<sup>9</sup> AP: What did the hairdressers look like or smell like?

Jean: I'm trying to remember, it was really quite a nice salon, I can't remember, I'm trying to think. There was quite a lot of plants around, I can't even remember the colour now, it was a pale colour if I remember, but I'm just stabbing in the dark, because there wasn't anything to sort of spark off -

This was an impression born out in my own visits to for example, 'La Paris' with its old and shabby furnishings, plastic plants and faded posters. In 'Cutz' a stool with a missing leg was being used as a makeshift table for the hairdressers' materials and salon visitors used old, mismatched living room chairs. Preparation of bleaches and other lotions was done on same



In contrast, Jean and others recalled in detail staff, customers, and salon life:

Jean: Mostly my mother would do it herself, but yes, a lot of the time I did go to the hairdressers with my Mum on a Saturday morning [...] That was, I liked that, I liked it. It was a place in St Enoch's Square which used to be the old arches which was below the old St Enoch's Hotel [...] and there was a hairdressers there Lizzy Kelly, now 'Lizzy Kelly's' is still going, she's now in Bath Street and her and her husband ran the salon and they were really, I mean really nice to me. And my mum would go in there and get her hair done [...]

AP: Can you remember the reasons why you have positive memories of it? What was it about it that you liked?

Jean: The friendliness you know, and everybody speaking to everybody and you know, and it was sincere, it was sort of genuine and they couldn't do enough for you, you know.<sup>10</sup>

Ettie described another Glasgow salon environment of the 1960s with a diverse female clientele:

We used to do prostitutes in the morning, maybe some housewives, grannies, babies, children, first haircuts, lunchtime you'd get the buyers out of Daly's, Copelands, Pettigrew, C&A, all the shops on Sauchiehall Street, you used to get office workers as well coming in at lunchtime, in the afternoon, again, back to housewives, teachers, then after half three, four o'clock, you were on your feet...

As a young, working-class, Catholic woman Ettie intimated that her knowledge of life was indubitably broadened by her customers:

- and they'd be saying, "*Hi, I want such and such.*" and you'd get on with what you were doing and it was as if you were invisible, after that they'd be talking about things like - it wasn't a word used then, abortion, or, "*She's at the clinic*" or "*She's not going down to the base*"<sup>11</sup> or - and references to homosexuality. You'd see some of the gays coming in and saying "*Sandra, there's a lot of Yanks up at the flat and they are hanging socks up and they are all dripping all*

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ledge as tea making and condiment storage. In 'Cutz' there was no tea making area, the male boss brought in carry out coffees rather than provide any brewing up equipment.

Francine worked with extensions laid out in front of her on a two legged stool. Her equipment consisted of a lighter for burning the ends of the extensions and a comb. The interviewing process in salons and at Northend College was physically uncomfortable. I was frequently perched on precarious stools or chair arms.

<sup>10</sup> Jean's pleasures in salon visits occasionally extended far beyond the limits of the interior: "*I mean, I was interested in photography and things and I remember Lizzy's husband had just bought a camera, it was a Canon at the time and he said to me, 'Would you like to try, take it' and he gave it to me and I went away into Glasgow and started using his brand new camera, just trying it out for him and then coming back, whenever and handing it back into him, you know, and that kind of thing, very trusting you know*".

<sup>11</sup> The Polaris Submarine base on the Clyde where many prostitutes worked.



*over the place.*” [Laughter] You could write - you could do a play, a sixties play. I had never seen it and I said to my mother, “*Mum*”, because we came from an Irish, Catholic family, she was a bit more straight laced than me but very caring too - because I said to her, “*Mum.*” I said, “*There’s prostitutes coming in.*”, “*Just you treat them like Mary Magdalene, the way you would her.*” she said

Sandy remembered the women’s salon where she began working aged 13 as ‘safe’:

I got fifty pence, I got a fifty pence piece for a Saturday morning, you know, but, I mean, I just loved it. I loved the environment. I felt so safe in there. It was like, it was just all these regulars, customers for shampoos and sets, that’s what it was, and, like, there wasn’t blow-waving, in fact, when I got older, I was the one who started the blow-waving, the first that had ever been done in the salon, it never - they had never done it. It was just like shampoos and sets, and then little girls coming in for dry cuts and things.<sup>12</sup>

This perception of salons and fashioning spaces being safe environments where specific codes; example on touching, disclosures or other aspects of intimacy were used was widespread. On occasions, I was surprised by taken-for-granted accounts of intimacies:<sup>13</sup>

AP: [attempting to prompt...] - when Tony’s [hairdresser’s] wife came in [to the salon] on the first occasion and it was very, very rainy outside –

Ellen: Oh yes, and was she taking her clothes off or something? [Laughter] I can’t remember the ins and outs of it. I do remember it because I didn’t realise it was his wife. [Laughter]

AP: Exactly, exactly, so you are going into the hairdressers, from what I gather, you were sitting there and were oblivious that this person is his wife and she comes in and puts her brolly down –

Ellen: - that’s right -

AP: - and?

Ellen: - her coat, and then she took her trousers off. [Laughter] [...] <sup>14</sup> Maybe it had to do with the space in the hairdressers. I’ll tell you it’s kind of funny because there’s no private space in it

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<sup>12</sup> Sandy and others implied a ‘safety from fashion’ – a fashion inertia that I also noted in some salon contexts.

<sup>13</sup> Ellen had told me of an occasion, on her *first* visit to her new local salon, before our interview took place. I was keen to encourage her to relate this on tape but she failed to see why this might be noteworthy.

<sup>14</sup> I probed Ellen further, asking whether she thought that this was an encounter that she could imagine happening in other local shops or businesses.



[...] It's just, you know, these really old fashioned ones where you go in the door, and the door and the window are all one, and you go in and it just goes like that. [Describes rectangle with her hands.][...] - yeah, and there's sinks and things -

AP: - and mirrors -

Ellen: - and that's it, there's nowhere, there's no private space so if you are in a familiar space and there's no other place to go to take – [Laughter]<sup>15</sup>

Trial and error was employed to identify a fashioning environment that suited customers. Janey frequented Northend College, where customers received beauty and hairdressing services from students of cosmetology at a cut-price rate: *"I can sit here and relax and get someone to do something for me [...] I used to go to the hairdressers and I was never really happy. Since I came here I've learned more about my hair because they really look after it and they do know what they are doing, advise me what to do myself at home"*<sup>16</sup>

#### Getting 'triggered up': hair cutting occasions

Haircutting and fashioning more generally was often discussed in association with specific events. Hair management was a factor in Jean's mother's preparation for a holiday:

And we were going away on holiday and my mum and I think my Gran said *"It's time she got a hair cut because you can't handle it"* and I couldn't handle it, my mother brushing [...] so I think they thought *"Right, we need to get rid of Jean's hair. [Laughter] because it's going to take too long, we're going on holiday so let's cut the hair"* and I was - and I went into the hairdressers and I sort of threw a tantrum.<sup>17</sup>

Since salon visits were often occasioned by significant events, the heightened emotions of customers were palpably or vicariously felt by hairdressers like Ettie: *"It's like a fair, its like a fair, sort of all different*

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<sup>15</sup> Ellen's description of the salon space was a template for all the salons visited for this research, her observations I read as offering a 'feminist insight' about the specificities of the fashioning environment generated by a participant. Although having a fully glazed facade like 'Cutz', 'La Paris' was made more private by the effect of condensation. A field memo recorded: *The salon was warm, the large windows on Marytown Road were steamed up, and a cosy atmosphere was created with lighting and the smell of shampoos, hair lotions and sprays.*

<sup>16</sup> A further unexpected demonstration of intimacy occurred when, embarking on my interview with Mrs Lohead she unselfconsciously grabbed my knee, which I interpreted as both reassuring and affectionate, and held on until the interview ended some 10 minutes later.

<sup>17</sup> This memory has resonances with Crawford et al's memory work findings where holidays for mothers and daughters are frequently conflict-laden, and for adult women are freighted with work and disappointments after fantasising: *"the promise of empty days"* or *"a break from work"* (Crawford et al, 1992, pp. 127-150). Getting a perm was one of the preparations Jenny still



*acts and different people doing - going to a wedding, going to a funeral, first haircut, baby's screaming, getting him a book, somebody'd cut somebody's head and it's bleeding profusely or somebody else has tried someone's wedding ring on and her fingers starting to swell up awful"* [Laughter].<sup>18</sup>

For the older, middle-class women participants such as Mrs Lohead, aged eighty-three, trips to the hairdressers as a young woman were a more frequently enjoyed outing:

Well yes, and you were always changing from one hairdresser to another, and wasn't sure if you liked the way they were doing it [Laughter] but it was always different, although not so frequently as now is the case. I had a hairdryer of my own, equipment, rollers, nowadays - but in earlier days it was different stuff and I washed it myself, and, you know, did it myself, anytime I was going out when I was young. I was always going to social dances and so on, I always paid a visit to the hairdresser before I went. That was a must.

In the case of home hair fashioning, and broader cosmetic acts, many participants articulated their personal perception of contexts and conditions where degrees of fashioning were deemed in/appropriate, for example, in Janey's statement "*Oh, I like the make-up, I wouldn't go without the make-up, going shopping I don't put it on, just when I go out*". Student Michelle claimed:

If it's a normal like, Uni day and I can't really be bothered, I'm tired, then I won't really do my hair - I'll do my hair, I'll maybe put my hair in a pony-tail, but it'll take me about forty minutes to get it until it's right. [Laughter] [...] I mean getting up in the morning, I don't go to college without - I mean some days I will just nip up to the shops without doing anything, but if I'm going out in public then I will put the make-up on.<sup>19</sup>

## Routines

Fashioning decisions often seemed idiosyncratic or individuated, rarely routines that were consciously acknowledging fashion or even social dictates. Regimes rather than fashion or the newness

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made for holidays: "*The next one will be September, I'm going to Blackpool [...] September weekend is always busy, so that's when we go, we pay so much a week to this gentleman and what we have left is spending money and travelling expenses*".

<sup>18</sup> Within the memory work triggered by the word hair, I generated the following text: *When A's aunty Suzie got married looking like Babs Windsor. Her hair was a gleaming, lacquered, peroxide white. A was a bridesmaid along with her cousin Jennifer. It was easy for Jennifer to fit into the bridesmaid role. She had lots of hair, was thin and was more feminine. A's grandma had made comments after their visit to the local hairdresser that the hairdresser had performed miracles to make something of A's hair as there was barely anything to work with. This (the comparison between Jennifer's big hair and her own) became a perennial family joke.* In a field memo I logged that the only other haircutting occasions I could remember from childhood were those preceding a dreaded return to school after summer holidays and accompanying Grandma on her Saturday visits. A striking and disorienting sight on Day 1 after a summer holiday were the massed ranks of others' new haircuts.

<sup>19</sup> Although many of her 150 pairs of shoes were high-heeled Michelle wore "*flattish shoes during the day*". Mrs Martin on the other hand wore high-heels in the salon even when this seemed ergonomically inappropriate.



of particular spaces or processes were discussed as pleasurable in and of themselves. Accounts of salon visits were imbricated with notions of routine articulated in often surprising ways.<sup>20</sup>

Interviewing customers at 'La Paris'<sup>21</sup>, for example, Jenny, a regular for 14 years and before that a regular at a salon nearby it became apparent that fidelity between customers and salon staff was widespread. Significant life changes, occasioning inevitably a visit to the hairdresser, became calibrated by the routines of salon visits. Some customers were loyal to a particular style<sup>22</sup> and Gabrielle's family had to plan around her hairdressing appointments:<sup>23</sup>

Gabrielle: I go every Saturday, except for this week [Christmas], I go Christmas week on Friday. Yes, I really like it.

AP: [...] - do you have your hair done when you are going to have visitors, or for special occasions?

Gabrielle: No, not really. I just go every Saturday whether anyone's coming or not. I just have it done for me [...] like - when Paul and Linda [son and daughter -in-law] came last Saturday afternoon and I said, "*I'm having my hair done first, I'll be about an hour*". They said, "*Well it's alright, we'll work round that we'll do a bit of shopping while you - you know, and we'll be there about two o'clock*".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> What follows was the response to my initial question directed at Ellen, a customer on my first visit to 'La Paris':

AP: How long have you been coming here?

Eileen: [having her hair washed] I'm not going to be able to hear you right.

AP: Oh I'm sorry! I'll wait until you've had it washed. [Approx. 1min]

Irene: [hairdresser]: How long was that you were away then Ellen? [Ellen had returned tanned from a holiday abroad]

Eileen: Eh?

Irene: How long were you away?

Eileen: Fortnight.

AP: How long have you been coming here then Ellen?

Eileen: Eh?

AP: How long have you been coming here?

Eileen: Ehh...God, Irene how long?

Irene: What age is Ralph? Before that.

Eileen: Ralph was 21, no before that.

Irene: Lisa's 21, before Lisa was born.

Eileen: Yeah, before Lisa was born. So about...

Irene: Well how long have I been down here? [General Laughter]

Eileen: I think it was when you come Irene.

Irene: Aha, aye

Eileen: When Mrs Martin took over.

Irene: Well before that.

Eileen: That's right.

Irene: So about, well we've been here 22 years, so about 22 years. Even before then you came to this shop didn't you?

Eileen: Yes, aha.

Irene: Even before that so -

AP: [Laughing] So you must like it! You must do a good job [to Irene].

<sup>21</sup> The name of the salon resembles that of many others in Glasgow in that it evokes specific associations of aristocratic and/or Hollywood or Continental glamour, for example: Aphrodite, Corniche, Damask, Et Vous, Hollywood Hair Studio, Maison Gina, Maison Olga, My Fair Lady, Narcissus, Panache, Studio 1, International, Vanity Fair...

<sup>22</sup> Pauline had had her hair dyed blonde for twenty years and it was many years before Mrs. Martin could restyle Jenny's bouffant with hairpiece first adopted at the neighbouring salon. Cox notes that she was "*intrigued by my grandmother's perm, which never seemed to alter. She sported the same tight curly style in family photographs of the 1930s right through to the 1990s, which was set at the hairdresser's once a week and permed every six to eight weeks or so*" (Cox, 1999, p. 10).

<sup>23</sup> Her two sons, daughter and grandchildren could only manage infrequent visits but the importance of her hairdressing routine was understood by all her family.

<sup>24</sup> Mrs Lohead could afford to have her hair fashioned regularly. She travelled several miles from a wealthy suburb outside Glasgow to 'La Paris' a cheap salon, to enable this. Mrs Lohead's routine comprised; shampoo setting and blow-drying (weekly), trimming (six weekly), perming (quarterly), and tinting (twice a year) "*because I go to church on Sunday, I go out on*



Daily or weekly cosmetic routines, even those used many years before, were frequently remembered by participants with clarity. Janey could recall her preferred method of applying make-up in the living room of her family home in preparation for nights out skating or at a Glasgow ballroom in the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> For Michelle, her sister and their five pals preparing for weekend socialising was, from the late 1990s on, an event requiring up to two meticulously planned and executed days work.<sup>26</sup>

### Hair fashioning intimacies

Ettie: I think it's confessor, somebody you shared with, became a best friend, because they were seeing you every week, sometimes twice a week - come in for a set every week regardless -

Participants highlighted intimacies within fashioning environments. Jean, describing 'Lizzy Kelly's said of the relationship between customers and hairdressers: *"It was quite close you know, it was kind of personal, personal thing you know, I think, you know, I'm trying to put it into words here, you know, I - that's how my mother always went back, because it was the way you were treated and the closeness and they were always pleased to see you and they made you feel really welcome"*.

Sandy and Ann disclosed the subtleties of confidentiality required:

Sandy: I felt very safe in there. It probably took me a time to get safe, but really you had to be trusted, you know, it was like, 'What's said in here won't go any further.' you know, so it probably took a time to - for me to be initiated in and be allowed to listen in on the - all the gossip and stuff, but once you were it was great, you know, you were so trusted".<sup>27</sup>

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*Saturday, and also I go, have a meeting every Monday, Women's Royal Voluntary Service, so I always like to get my hair done on a Friday, or Saturday morning so I'm all trigged up [sic] for the weekend -".* Another more expensive salon was also visited for less frequent treatments.

Even within each salon visit, movement around the space was regimented. In a memo made during my visit to 'La Paris' I wrote: *"The customers moved [were guided] around the space at each stage: 1. Hair washing, 2. Setting lotion and rollers, 3. Hairdryer, 4. Back to mirrored area where their hair was teased into shape, from chair to chair in a semi-circle, clockwise. The hairdressers did not sit down"*.

<sup>25</sup> *"Start off with a skin toner. I always used something to take all the grease off my face and then I always used a moisturiser and at that time it was Max Factor pan cake so you had to wet the sponge and it went on, you know, and I tried not to put it on thick, I hated to see anyone with makeup that you could scrape off. I tried to make it as natural as possible"*. She would usually prepare herself with friends who would share cosmetics and help each other fashion.

<sup>26</sup> Michelle began by selecting her outfits:

Michelle: Yes, once I kind of know what I'm doing I'll say to Sheila, [her sister] *"Oh I want this kind of colour"* and she'll do my make-up for me but usually - we used to do it on a Friday night if we were all going on a Saturday, a Friday night would be like prep night, preparation night, and we'd all do our nails, our toenails, because obviously they had to match our hand nails would have to match what shoes we were wearing then your toes and hands and nails and pluck out the things that matched and that was more of a kind of ritual because Sheila, again, she would be waxing everybody.

AP: She does all the waxing as well?

Michelle: She does everything [Laughter] [Leg waxing took place every six weeks].

<sup>27</sup> The pejorative notion of gossip was countered in many accounts of the intimate discussions of salon customers and specifically in Ettie's view: *"Nobody's got time now, it's considered gossip or something if you stand and give somebody the time of day,*



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Ann: Often people will divulge things to their hairdresser or their beauty therapist that they wouldn't normally divulge, and then again what we used to teach is about being, just exactly that thing, about, it's not about you at the time, it's not important for you to be commenting about what's happening in your life, you must listen to this person and you must not comment on it. [Laughter] You can't really give an opinion, you just can listen, and if people do that well, that is really a good service [...] And that of course is something that we used to teach. I don't know if that's of interest but we used to just to - to take notes of people just like, you know, if someone's husband is not well or - try and remember the details so that you can ask next time, that you can record it.<sup>28</sup>

Both learnt from other salon workers and also at college about how to manage intimacies in the salon environment:

Sandy: I suppose they were very – [...] I mean, they [customers at 'Marjory's] treated me like their daughter, you know, it was like, that was a lovely, there wasn't - they just weren't, sort - I mean, when we went to college we were taught about, you know, I went on day release to college later and we were taught these sort of ethical things, and, oh yes, it was part of the course about boundaries and things and certain codes, and [...] the first code I was ever taught of how to be was never to touch the customer's lips, you could never touch the customer's lips, [...] because there's a lot of touching that actually goes on in hairdressers, you know, so it's just like these codes and things, but I only learnt those really in college and it was just like, you get a feel for it and you know, I can't - I don't know how to describe how you, sort of, know what are the OK things, you know, like as well, their culture, there were certain customers that you could say certain things to and that was right and you could tell them about Doris, you know Doris [mimics inaudibly sharing a confidence] but if such a body came in you absolutely don't mention Doris to so and so, and you had to learn all these, these subby [sic] kind of things.

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Ann: I think that that is one of the most difficult things is to get that communication right, and what I used to always say to students was to try and listen very, very carefully because it's our job to please that person most of all. And so often when you get it wrong it's just because you haven't really listened, or you have an idea in your head of what they thought would really suit them, and that really doesn't matter because what you have to do is please that person. Your notion of what they should look like isn't necessarily the way they want to look.

Ann developed a training company after leaving the beauty field and Sandy qualified as a counsellor. Both stated that the interpersonal skills developed in hairdressing were transferable:

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*everybody's rushing, in fact have they not made a fast lane in the pavements in London and if you walk slowly you are going to get a ticket or fined".*

<sup>28</sup> Ann, a former hairdresser, had taught hairdressing ethics. She had helped devise the first beauty courses in Scotland.



Sandy: I think, well, I do I think I learnt the basic counselling skills as a hairdresser for sure because it was about women coming in and you know, building up trust relationships and them confiding in you. It was a place for confidences, [...] but it was, because it was all about women going into the salon and calling their husbands, you know [Laughter] [...] and talking about their husbands and saying you know "*Oh the shit*" or "*Sods*" you know, that type of thing, you know, but being very, but very strong codes about confidentiality and supporting each other and - but not realising they were supporting each other, you know and so, yeah I certainly learnt a lot about, sort of, how to be with, how to be supportive and how to be with other women from that and it was a lovely time in my life in many ways.

Ettie and Sandy also made clear in their contributions that as young women the frankness of exchanges and intimacies shared in salon were illuminating:

Ettie: So you listen, to the sharing, people share with you things that you wouldn't even share with your - I remember one saying, "*I'm haemorrhaging*" I learnt an awful lot in hairdressing as well like - that held me in good stead for the choices I made. [...] another one, she had a coil in, another one - I used to think why are women going through this? Is this what being married and being a woman is about? I don't want any of this I want to stay healthy you see. One on the coil, one used a tampon and put another one in and it was rotting inside her and caused an infection in her ovaries but ach, we had laughs as well. [...] But this time I was approaching marriage, I'm eighteen, nineteen, approaching and I'm, it was a good learning field being a hairdresser because when people share with you, you learn an awful lot about people and it really was on the shop floor and I was thinking to myself, what am I going to do here? I don't want any of this, miscarriages and haemorrhaging [...] They shared their deepest - if they miscarried, if they wanted a baby and couldn't have one, they shared their deepest - their affairs or dates or dates that went wrong, or someone giving them a dizzy as they called it then, that's standing you up, that's not appearing for a date "*I stood there and I was all dressed up, remember you did my hair? And I looked that good and he never appeared*". They shared the deepest hurts, their joys as well: "*My daughters getting married*" or "*My daughter's had a baby*" or "*I'm expecting*".<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>During the 1960s when working relationships between young women in the service industries and those in the sex industry would have been unusual, Ettie enjoyed friendships with her prostitute customers: "*At Christmas you were like that [mimes being laden with gifts] going out, they were giving, you had to get a taxi home, very generous girls*".

Although Ann's formal training suggested that the active listening mode was the professional approach to discussing intimacies in the salon, Ettie's description of the array of sometimes distressing disclosures prompted me to ask about the emotional impact on workers.

AP: How did you cope because you are talking about say, in those twelve hour shifts at the height of you know, your working in this field, how did you offload? Because obviously you're taking all that information, you are not allowed to say enough, I don't want to hear -

Ettie: Nooooo [emphatically] because you speak to them too, it was a kind of two way - which was quite - they were really interested in me as well, but you were reciprocating their, you were - probably - there was no such thing as counselling then, everybody's getting counselled now you know, therapy and all that - [...] And she would be saying "*And how's your love life going? And how's your wee boy? And -?*"



The accounts of hairdressing from hairdressers suggested that a range of expertise in addition to fashioning skills were required in the field, an ethics of care that extended into diverse areas of welfare for clients and built upon degrees of intimacy and trust.<sup>30</sup> Hairdressers with the required skills and, remarkably, the majority of those interviewed or discussed by participants seemed to possess these qualities, engendered loyalty in customers like Gabrielle:

You know the corner shop? A hairdresser opened there and this – she’s called Joyce but she only [...] rented the premises and she had a row with the landlord and she’s left there, but she’s moved to where the co-op is at Main Road so we’ve – all her customers have sort of followed her there so I’m with her now, and she sort of, oh, she is kind, she’s very helpful, she has like, always lets me know when it wants cutting or you know, colouring and if - because I’ve got very poor hair you know, now, its one or two – because of taking medication, it’s got one or two patches which she’s covered up you know, yes.<sup>31</sup>

Ettie demonstrated a broad array of caring skills and articulated a vision of the symbolism of her role and the importance of hair for others:

She would be a Down’s Syndrome, or a wee girl would be brought in with nits and you would have to use your very - just like a doctor would if it was a skin rash, or, I know some hairdressers who would just throw the comb down and refuse to - I just quietly cut their hair, took the gown off, put my tools in, wrapped them up together and quietly wrote a note out to her mother. You’ve got to preserve and protect the dignity of the person.

On another occasion, contacted by a former customer, Ettie was asked to do a home visit for her husband, a stroke victim, whose hair had grown unchecked:

I cut the curls off and used the machine on the rest of his face, thank God a machine was around then, cut his hair and do you know what? It was worth a weeks wages to seeing him looking in the mirror, *“How’s that for you?” - “That’s me instead of this paralysed alien person.”* He was

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<sup>30</sup> The notion of hairdresser as confidante is a fusion of myth, media invention and reality. Customers and hairdressers at the ‘Pure Velvet’ salon in Leamington Spa were recently profiled in a popular women’s magazine where the themes of ‘services beyond fashioning’, ‘confidential be-friending and confidence building’ and ‘woman-centred care’ are rehearsed. One customer claimed: *“She’s more than just a hairdresser. Through cutting my hair she’s become my best friend, therapist and personal stylist rolled into one. She knows all my secrets”* Other comments included *“Marion’s become a friend for life. She knows everything about me and when I need advice I simply come here for a haircut. It costs me £20 a time. I come here up to three times a week mainly for a blow dry”* and *“She really has been a shoulder to cry on – and I’ve needed it. It really was a case of ‘I want to cut that man right out of my hair’ – the best cure possible”* (Valentine, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Gimlin in her research on salons in Long Island defines a hairdresser’s “faithful group of clients” as a *following* (Gimlin, 1996, p. 516).



gradually getting back his - and I think I lifted his spirits. I know I did. I think I did and there's no credit for that in hairdressing, there's no money could buy that.

### 5.3 Hair and familial, sororial and salon-based relationships

#### Relationships and grooming

For Haug et al, 'Hair' triggered memory work texts that, when analysed, revealed its significance as a contested site of power.<sup>32</sup> In this research, some participants' accounts suggested that children's hair fashioning reflected aspects of relationships between generations. Jean's fright at the hairdressers and her consequent rescue by her mother precipitated the following face off:

We stood waiting on a bus and my Gran turned round to my mother and said "*Well I wouldn't let any four year old, Margaret, dictate to me, but it's up to you*". My mother marched me all the way back to the hairdressers, sat me on her knee and the girl had to cut my hair short on her knee and that happened so, but, that was my hair short.

Michelle's memories of first-haircut trauma were compounded by and associated with parental disagreement:

Early, very first, I used to have really long hair, right down my back, so did my sister and my Dad cut my hair - well my Mum and Dad - I wasn't well for a few months, er, like, a few weeks and my hair had just got all matted and my Dad had to go and cut it into a kind of page boy thing and I remember locking myself in the room because he was saying [Indecipherable] but he did cut my hair into a horrible page boy thing [Laughter] it was horrible, so that was my first haircut and I must have been about 7 [...] - I don't know whether it was because it was my Dad that was cutting it but he was so nuts I just didn't want him to cut it and he did and I think actually - I was picking it up from my Mum as well because my Mum went absolutely ballistic when he cut it. She didn't know he was going to cut it - she knew, they were talking about it, but then he just did it and she went nuts.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Although issues of fascism, respectability, the rise of notions of meaningful black hair and children's subjugation by parental power are discussed at length in Haug et al's chapter on hair, and despite their socialist feminist proclivities, issues of class are not addressed in this analysis (Haug et al, 1983, pp. 91-113).

<sup>33</sup> First-haircut trauma, and subsequent enforced hairdressing regimens were also remembered by Elizabeth as a battleground between father and daughter: "*My very, very first memory of like, a hair memory if you like, I don't know if this is relevant, but anyway - was being taken to a barbers by John, my step-father when I would only be about 3 and a half or 4 and I was absolutely terrified of going into the - sitting in the barber's chair and I howled the place down and they couldn't get to cut my hair so I've always had a bit of a problem with actual hairdressers*".

Asked about her first style Jackie remembered that she had cut off the sides of her own hair to look like Suzi Quatro's feather cut. Her mum cried when she saw it and Jackie was marched off to the hairdressers to have the cut 'salvaged'.



Memories of hair fashioning were linked with notions of femininity and class in specific timeframes.

Elizabeth grew up in a working-class home in the 1950s:

I never remember my Mum pressurising me into having a perm and I think it's because, first of all it would have cost her money and money was extremely tight, but secondly I think by then either she personally - or generally there was coming the idea that all these very harsh perming fluids and methods, dyes and so on were not very good for the hair so, because it was, it was definitely still the time of perms being very popular, it was certainly predated like Mr Teazy Weazy bouffants and later Mary Quant, that was, that was like when Janet, my sister [...] was a teenager, certainly when I was at school my Mum insisted that I did go to the hairdressers and have my hair cut and I hated it because she used to have it cut far, far too short because it was money again, it was always – [...] have it cut short to save money, I mean my hair didn't grow very fast anyway so I mean it was always torment coming out feeling, feeling very unfeminine, very uncomfortable but also nits were a continuous problem you know then at school so I know Mum had this idea if you had your hair cut short than it would mean you weren't as likely to get nits because we still had the nit nurse-

Since, in most cases parental responsibility resided with female relatives, daughters like Jean and Elizabeth would frequently accompany mothers and other female carers on visits:

Elizabeth: Now, I remember vividly going with my Mum and also Nana at times just to watch - they took me because they were looking after - they couldn't leave me at home because I was too young, but I remember that women's hairdressers so vividly because it was the smell of it, it was that perming lotion at that time, well, what would it be? Late 1940s, maybe early 50s, but I think it would be '49, '50 something like that, if you went to the hairdresser it was to have a perm and I just remember- I mean it was world of its own - I mean it was the time of very aggressive looking hairdressing pieces of equipment, so it was just like nothing else you know, any other place that you went to.

For some, the memories of hairstyling, usually begun as a job undertaken by a female relative, was inextricably bound to profound or clearly recalled memories of the intimacy of sharing the domestic space.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jean's fastidiousness in fashioning herself and her home was a trait she shared with her gran: *"She had white hair and it was always groomed, I mean she was always immaculate my gran and she - when she worked about the house she kept her hat on [Laughter] she had one of these, you know, the old, you know the aprons they used to wear it was like a coat with no sleeves in with sort of floral design and tied at the sides, she would come home, take her good coat off, put this over her and work about the house but always - never went out without a hat, always had a hat on, that was the done thing then and lovely, black, fitted coats that came in at the waist and then skirted down, but always very smart, I mean she never had a lot, she worked hard all her life in domestic service but she put money away and would save up for whatever and she always kept herself well turned out."* [...] Adele: When you fashioned yourself [like that] who'd you got to model yourself on then?

Jean: Well my gran came to stay with us, my mother's mother, she looked after me because my mother worked most of the time. And my father worked, and my gran died when I was seven so I was with her constantly up until I was seven, so we went to tea-



Some accounts of fashioning initiations, between mentor/mother and mentee/daughter expand the limitations of notions of cosmetic acts.<sup>35</sup> Ettie's son Padraig bought and cut Izal toilet paper squares as a cheap substitute for perming 'mops' (paper pieces used in hair processing) used by his mother. Daniel and /or other children were/ was on call when Ettie attended the stoke victim. Ettie implied that she understood this situation as a form of moral mentoring:

This man I was telling you about, she [his wife] said "*Beards*" I said "*that doesn't bother me*"[...] so he coped with the stroke and then he had to cope with – hair doesn't stop growing, this - so - cut it with shears, I had to cut it with scissors first, no problem, I don't know who helped me, I think it was Daniel [youngest child] that was with me that day, so they are getting a wealth of - seeing that people don't all walk, talk, say - I always felt it would give them an attitude of - if they saw housebound, in a wheelchair...

The descriptions of relationships between hairdresser and customer, whether professionals, friends or family members, constituted a mass of treasured memories. For many years, before she discovered that she could access hairdressing at Northend College, Maureen was curly permed and treated to a weekly hairdo by her pal.<sup>36</sup> The skills gained by Pauline at Northend were appreciated by regular customer, Jo:

AP: How would you describe the relationship between hairdresser and customer? [To Pauline]

Jo: I suppose it's better if you talk and get on.

Pauline: Make them comfortable, make them feel as though your attention is all on them.

Jo: So you're just kidding on? [...] So you're not my pal? [Laughter]

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rooms, and I mean tea rooms were tea-rooms then, and met all her old friends and all the gossip that was going on and I remember the ways the tables were set and all the lovely cakes and these sort of cake plates had three tiers and all that kind of stuff and that sort of influenced me a lot as well but that was, I mean, how she was with me, my gran, do you know what I mean? She was very good to me, we were very close, we slept together in the same big old double bed in the house because there wasn't really enough room, you know, my brother had the wee bed in the corner and they had the big double bed which I slept in with my gran and we all went on holiday together and all that sort of thing.

Jean discussed accompanying her gran whilst she was in service. I reflected that her exposure to the aesthetics of the upper middle classes might have shaped her own and her gran's desires and aspirations and those of my own grandmother who was in service as a girl. At home Ettie witnessed tailoring and millinery destined for 'the gentry' and had styled hair for wealthy and fashionable women. She had subsequently developed her own sophisticated tastes in hair and interiors. It occurred to me that just as Jean had recreated the 'look' of nineteenth century bourgeois grandeur in her flat and working-class hairdressers like Ettie had had the means and the know-how to appropriate the 'look' of another class for themselves and thus refuse class differences in their self-fashioning.

<sup>35</sup> Ann's mothers mentoring enabled her daughter to overcome a painful episode of pubescent trauma: "*I was thirteen, and I had no idea I was even spotty you know what I mean, I thought I was lovely and your Mum thinks you are lovely you never thought anything about it, you know, so I went home that night and I just said to my mother 'That's it, I'm not going back to school.' you know, and, 'We'll have to change schools' [...] and she said 'Don't be daft, don't be daft' and she - she went upstairs and brought down her make-up bag you see and she covered up my spots a bit [...] because I did have quite bad acne you know, and she started tweezing my eyebrows a bit you know, and she gave me her mascara and it got me into school the next day and that's the only reason I think I could go back in*".



Pauline: Make her feel good about herself.

Jo: It makes a big difference if you go into a hairdresser's and they talk to you instead of just kind of doing your hair and not speaking.

### Learning to fashion

Learning cosmetic acts was remembered as a far from transparent discipline for young women growing up in the immediate post-war period. Many including Jean's mother and aunts and Gabrielle and her sisters taught each other how to negotiate this potentially fraught territory.<sup>37</sup>

Few instructive texts were available for young women like Gabrielle struggling to raise a family on a very low income. She resorted to consulting a book first used by her mother: *"Yes, they were like books, very old ones like, one was called The Red Letter [...] Yes, Red Letter was one, because my mum used to have it, but I can't remember many more and there was these tips, but I don't think anybody would use vinegar now to rinse their hair in would they?"*<sup>38</sup> Maureen was one of several participants whose memories of fashioning began with experimentation with her mother's cosmetics, shoes and garments. Janey described the relationship between herself and her mother through articulations of what may be described as inter-fashioning, where the boundaries between her mother's fashioning and her own are not easily distinguished but are shared or seamlessly inherited:

Janey: Oh my Mum was very proud of the way she looked. She always wore a hat and one thing she always taught me, when you a buy a coat buy a hat, gloves, shoes, bag and umbrella all to match and I got that twice a year, summer and winter, I got the whole, complete outfit and you never went out with a new coat on without all the trimmings. She was really fashion conscious

AP: [...] did she have certain sorts of fashioning regimes for her own hair and make-up or did she not use -

Janey: She liked her hair to look really nice and she always got what she called a blue rinse.

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<sup>36</sup> *"She done wonders, it was great [...] she used to think I was taking a loan because I used to come down every week, I used to say 'I'm going out, going out, going out' she'd say 'Where are you going?' and I'd say 'I don't know yet, just do my hair' and when she started back at work again she couldnae [...] She's got twin boys and all"*.

<sup>37</sup> Gabrielle: Well, it was my sister Joan that got me this job inspecting these cookers you see, and - at the factory, and she said, *"Put some make-up on"* and I said *"I haven't got any"* so she said *"Keep buying something every week"* and she told me what to get and you know, and I kept trying it and at first I used to put too much red on and she told me - or too much of that pan stick on and she said *"Make it so that it goes right - er - you know, past your cheeks that pan stick and not in your hair, make sure you get it all round and under your neck you know"*.



AP: A blue rinse, right, so did she have that done at the hairdressers?

Janey: Sometimes I did it for her.

AP: So do you remember applying make-up or putting perfume on or powder or anything like that?

Janey: On myself?

AP: Doing - your mum doing that?

Janey: Oh yes, she always wore her perfume, she didn't wear a lot of makeup, she liked powder on her face.<sup>39</sup>

Whereas it is impossible to accurately quantify the popularity of specific hairstyling by women in any decade, in the course of this research I began to imagine that every other participant born between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1970s would reveal that they too had a beehived or bouffanted aunt, grandma or sister-in law who was to inspire experiments with dissident self-fashioning. At Northend I found Pauline whose sister-in-law had possessed a coveted blonde beehive.<sup>40</sup> Pauline's early experimentation with the hair of friends and relatives is echoed in other participants' accounts including Ettie who learnt to fashion hair and develop her own ethics of care by grooming male relatives: *"I'd always cut Jimmy's and old uncles and things. My mother was a great one for, 'Take uncle Joe in, shave him and cut his hair and give him a clean shirt' Wayward old uncles that didnae bother with themselves, cut his toenails and all that. [Laughter] You weren't frightened to have hands on stuff".*<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Red Letter* was a romance and fiction magazine of the 1920s.

<sup>39</sup> A regime adopted by Janey herself. This notion was also inferred in Ann's comments about her mother's fashioning practices: *"Oh yes, aha, oh yes, she put her make-up on every day, which you know I'm just exactly like her now"*. Michelle rooted her own interest in shoes to her experimentation with her gran's shoes

Michelle: I think it goes back to my gran who used always wear big high heels and me and Sheila used to dress with them on and break your ankles and the first memory I have - when I got my new denim outfit and me and my wee cousin, we used to, we used to go in our house quite - also and my wee cousin was just a wee baby in her pram and my aunt used to have white high heels and I don't know whether this was because we weren't allowed heels either, but I borrowed the high heels and I wore them and we were playing dolls and we had the wee baby and that's the first pair of shoes I ever really remember wanting and coveting these shoes

AP: What were they like, were they high white ones were they platforms or -?

Michelle: No, no they were kind of pointy.

<sup>40</sup> AP: So what did you, did you experiment on any -?

Pauline: Everybody. [Laughter] Everybody. I was always cutting people's hair and they were always cracking up with me.

AP: So what do you think inspired you to start doing that?

Pauline: I don't know, my sister in-law was a hairdresser and I used to love what she used to do with hair.

AP: What did she use to do?

Pauline: Ach, all the different shapes a hair and what she used to do with it, colour and things like that. [...]

<sup>41</sup> In a memory work text, A recorded: *"Occasionally when her granddad fell asleep A would play sometimes alone sometimes with her cousin with his thick, curly, silver and grey hair. The front was very long and she would plait the strands, use hairgrips and ribbons and on one or two occasions he would wake and, oblivious to his headful of bows and ribbons walk his dog"*. Although at a later date Ettie's mother had invested the relatively large sum required for her daughter to become indentured as a hairdresser, Ettie noted that her flair for fashioning was generated in the midst of creative activities taking place in a busy household: *"I came from -my grandmothers children - at that point she had six, she had four daughters and two sons. One of the*



Radical difference rather than mirroring sometimes characterised the fashionings of female relatives of different generations <sup>42</sup>. Whereas Michelle was affectionate about what she read as her grandmother's fashion *faux pas*, claiming a link with her own 'shoe fetishism', she was at pains to distance herself from her mother's style, Ellen, committed to the pursuit of the goal of creating a head of natural looking blonde hair was also fondly patronising in her account of her mother's own hair fashioning routine:

She used to, she used to [Laughter] dye the front bit of her hair you know in that very kind of peroxide, it was just peroxide and a toothbrush and it was always sitting in the bath, just sitting there and every so often she would –[Laughter]

AP: So when did she start doing, do you remember her doing -?

Ellen: I remember her doing that as a wee girl yes aye.

AP: And what sort of hairdo did she have?

Ellen: God love her but she - all the men in our family have the most gorgeous thick, luxurious, curly hair and all the women have very straight, thin - whatever but Mum always just had very forties, that kind of like a page boy but rings, curls, just kind of curled, so she always done the blonde bit, it was peroxide.

AP: And did you ever ask her why she did that? What she was modelling herself on?

Ellen: To me it was - it was these ladies in these films you know, not Celia Johnson as such but that kind of-

Michelle, one of the few participants who identified herself and her mother as feminist was alone in having no memories of her mother self-fashioning, except for her curly perm<sup>43</sup> "*She'd always had her hair like that always, always. She wasn't into make-up I think she wore make-up but I don't ever remember her putting it on or seeing her doing any kind of fashioning*".<sup>44</sup>

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*daughters was a milliner in Daly's, and one was a tailoress so, without realising it, you're sitting in your grandmothers house, you're playing around, you're watching someone doing a hat, you're watching somebody else making trousers, bespoke tailors they called them then, they - sewers for the gentry, so that was maybe an inspiration too, very close family, so aye*". Many participants discussed their pleasures and skills in dressmaking. Elizabeth, and Janey would fashion a garment for a dance the night before, in Janey's case she would stay up until four in the morning to complete it.

<sup>42</sup> This is best illustrated in Michelle's grandmother's high heeled, bouffanted look, maintained in part by Michelle's hairdresser father, Michelle's mother's perennial curly perm and no make-up, and Michelle's own self-consciously ironic absorption in the world of fashion.

<sup>43</sup> A curly perm is allied to stylings that attempt to appear natural but involve setting and perming as with hair perceived to be more artificial.

<sup>44</sup> Michelle, a young woman during the 1980s, described her relationship with her mother regarding fashioning in ways that resemble the proscriptive attitudes and consequent transgressions of Elizabeth's adolescence in the 1950s:

AP: When did you start experimenting with make-up then?



Michelle described the relationship between her grandmother's, her mother's and her own fashioning as oppositional, but later intimates that she had inherited aspects of fashioning from her feminist mother. She described her initiation into 'becoming a hippy' to the soundtrack of a record collection inherited from her parents which included Hendrix, Joplin, Neil Young and Joni Mitchell.<sup>45</sup>

Some participants claimed to despair of their mother's tastes in fashioning, others remembered their mother's disdain at their own dissident tastes, but these cross-generational relationships generated less than predictable accounts. Ettie experienced shame and rejection from her own mother as a consequence of her hair-dyeing, but was an ally for her own daughter's hair-fashioning experimentation:

She [Sinead, her daughter] dyed her hair blue, plummy blue when she was going for her interview. She wanted her hair done just before she left school, "*Mum I'm going to get my hair dyed*" I said, "*No you're not. If anyone's dyeing your hair, I'll dye it*" and we picked a kind of nice plummy, a bit like that tray over there [...] "*If anyone's going to make a mess...*" So I dyed her hair and she got - which I think is ridiculous, she got detention, and she wasn't able to go to school for a week. Now there was no trouble, she never caused trouble or smoked or - and because her hair - hair means a lot.<sup>46</sup>

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Michelle: When I was older, a lot older than when I first started with the hair. I never wore make-up at school, well later on I did, older, maybe fourth year 15 maybe, 14, 15.

AP: And what did you start with?

Michelle: Red lipstick [Laughter] I wasn't allowed to wear make-up though. My mum was really strict. I wasn't allowed to wear like heeled shoes even though I was a tomboy. At one stage I fancied - I mean I'm talking about heels like that [indicates about an inch] I wasn't allowed any shoes like that at all, nothing, I wasn't allowed - like I wasn't allowed like, nylon tights. I wasn't allowed - we weren't allowed to wear clothes that were basically too old for us.

Michelle's sister, the person charged with the role of fashioning all those attending Michelle's pre-night-out fashioning sessions and presumably having had no instruction from her feminist mother in excessive cosmetic acts, attended a beauty course in order to gain fashioning skills for her own and as it transpired her sister and friends benefit.

<sup>45</sup> As a teenager, having seen photos of her uncle and mother's room at the same age where they had album covers over their bedroom walls like Jean, Michelle had replicated the effect in her own room. In the same phase, Michelle mined her mother's wardrobe alongside vintage clothes outlets.

An aspect of this discussion generated a fascinating dimension to fashioning, namely the reproduction of (photographic) records of fashioned femininity, of women wearing the same garments, across different generations:

AP: Where did you get these clothes from then? Were they in normal clothes shops?

Michelle: No, like 'Mr Ben' and 'Virginia Galleries'.

AP: So we're talking vintage?

Michelle: Vintage clothes and digging out my mum's old stuff as well.

AP: So how did she feel about you wearing her old stuff?

Michelle: I don't know. [...]

AP: So you knew where to get it, you went and got her old stuff [...] I just wondered, were there any photos of her wearing some of the gear you ended up wearing -

Michelle: Yes.

AP: Right ok, and had you seen those -

Michelle: Aha.

AP: Right, ok. You don't have any photos where you're wearing this gear that she -?

Michelle: Yes. [Laughter]

<sup>46</sup> Ettie subsequently challenged the headmaster about this punishment.



## Hair rites

Some participants acknowledged the role of mothers and other elders in unequivocally determining their own hair look.<sup>47</sup> This was discussed as a collective condition of childhood, where mothers created hair stylings over which girls had little control:

Elizabeth: When I look at family photographs or photographs of me and Janet when we were little I would say up to six and seven we always had bows – [Laughter] in our hair you know, it was the fashion for a bow at each side of the head and it's funny how I've seen lots of photos of like, Eastern, you know like Russian girls, even like, you know when Olga Korbuto came on the scene you know, and all those – it's the first time we saw all these young Russian girls and it was like, oh yes, it's just like the 50s again you know

Jean remembered enduring her own mother's delight in fashioning her to excess:

AP: So when your mum used to brush your long hair, what do you think she felt about your hair at that time?

Jean: I think she thought I had lovely, lovely hair and she used to tie it in bows and things - [Laughter] [...] much to my horror. [Laughter]

AP: Did you not like it?

Jean: I didn't really like, no, I didn't like it, I thought it was too, sort of, you know, fussy.

Speaking of her own pride in her daughter's hair, Gabrielle had rationalised Evelyn's distress:

Yes, I've got loads of memories, Evelyn's hair was dark, like it is now and it was naturally all ringlets and it was so nice [Laughter] [...] Her hair was long and I can remember sitting her on the table after we'd washed it and I used to brush it and she used to sob her little eyes out, and as I was brushing it to get the like, lugs [sic] out you know, the - it used to go back again like that, all in spirals, yes".

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<sup>47</sup> Analysing the material for this chapter I used a shorthand memo – 'Whose hair is it anyway?' to note a recurrent mis/use of hair belonging to children by adults and in some cases adults hair by hairdressers. Kuhn illustrates this theme in her reflections on her own mother's habits of using her daughter as a *tabula rasa* for fashioning fancy dress as, for example, 'Cinema Litter'. (Kuhn, 1995, pp. 40-58)



The shifts from parent/carer as hairdresser to visits to the salon were remembered by some as a significant rite of passage. Although she had never been permed, Elizabeth nevertheless acknowledged the significance of this process in just these terms:

In the 1950s having your first perm was, you know, like an initiation if you like, a mark of your - of your becoming a woman because, if you remember, in the 1950s there was no such thing as teenage you know, you were a child and then suddenly overnight you know, you had to dress and behave like, like a woman [...] I was never able to understand when I was little was why, why it was necessary to have things done to your hair you know, in – well, obviously it was something that you had to have done if you were going to an adult woman. I think it was very, very much tied up with the ideas of when you grow up this is what you have to have done to your hair, on the other hand there was an enormous emphasis by both my mother and grandma on natural looking hair, for example, I remember Nana very, very proudly showing me this photograph of her when she was eighteen and she had jet black hair and she took such pride in telling me how long it used to be and how she used to brush it and so she used to get this photograph out quite a lot and I never understood then why, you know, why she was so proud of this natural hair that she had as a young woman and why she was having her hair done you know, permed, tortured it seemed to me, and yes, so it made me think it was something to do with being an adult woman.

Hairdressing visits started for Mrs Lohead, who was of the generation of Elizabeth's mother, when she got engaged:

My first visit was when I was nineteen, I started to go when I got engaged at twenty-one, although I wasn't married till I was twenty-five [...] that's when perms had started and they called them a Marcel Wave. [...] I don't think I was there much before that, maybe I got a trim, but that was the first sort of, getting a particular, and then we used to go for [Indecipherable] it was tongs in those days and of course when I was getting married I went to get my hair all done.

Marking a change between being and living at home, where she was the much-cherished daughter and grandchild and surviving at school was symbolised for Jean in her rejection, aged twelve or thirteen of her mothers' in favour of her own outlaw fashioning. This new styling fused an identification with elder brothers and 'hard', older schoolgirls:

Before it was long and it was ringlets you know, so - and as I started to get, to get that bit older you know, and I was going to school, then I decided to get it cut shorter myself and then I



started to dye it blonde. I had two brothers who were blonde and I was the only one - well I had had fair hair when I was younger and as I got older my hair has always darkened down so I started to put a blonde dye through my hair.

In Elizabeth's accounts, the demarcations of good/bad, appropriate/excessive femininity and the roles and responsibilities of parents and children made glamour a desired but prohibited mode of self-fashioning:

In our house to spend any time at all on fashioning yourself or spending any time beautifying yourself, that was that was not regarded as a good thing at all [...] to be clean and healthy, you know, to start spending time on yourself was seen you know, as not a good thing to do, [...] you could be doing better things and nice girls don't do that and that sort of thing and yet I saw my mother spending a lot of time [Laughter] - on - but it was somehow - so it got very much tied with like, but when you're a child you know, a girl, you don't do that sort of thing, that's only what grown ups do, but there was never any preparation by my mother for it you know, it obviously wasn't seen, certainly as far as my mother saw the job concerned, she didn't see it as her job you know, to encourage me or to show me the skills of making yourself beautiful and I did envy, this is the memory I was going to tell you - I did so envy my friend Sharon who was an only child and they seemed to have loads of money in their house [...] Sharon used to tell me, oh, well, she always looked as though she did spend a lot of time on herself fashioning herself and everything and I was - I know I was very envious of her and when I mentioned it to my Mum at one time you know, that Sharon had this hairstyle, was wearing lipstick or whatever, Grandma said something like, *"Oh well her Mum will have groomed her"* and I was absolutely fascinated by this phrase, you know, 'She groomed her', it was like she was teaching her daughter you know, how to be beautiful and that - I didn't get that, so it was when I did start, you know, to want to make myself look beautiful, which I think meant feminine, I mean, it was very much you know, like doing it yourself kind of thing and very much in secrecy.<sup>48</sup>

Against her own mother's prescriptions Michelle began, whilst still at school, to fashion herself with the aim of creating an older look. Her experimentation with cosmetics suggests a link between feminine excess and perceptions of age:

Michelle: Oh, it was hellish, well, when I was getting into the lipstick and I was into real pure hairspray hairdos, hellish things.

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<sup>48</sup> I had remembered hearing at school that beehive hairdos were dirty and, as so-called evidence I was told that one woman had beetles or earwigs nesting in hers because she had not washed it for so long. Mikkelson and Mikkelson tracked the origins of this urban myth to the 1950s when beehives first became fashionable in the US: *"The original version is primarily a 'fatal vanity' type of legend about a young woman who dies [through spider bites/earwig infestation etc.] because she foolishly allows her pride in having the highest 'do' take precedence over basic hygiene"* (Mikkelson and Mikkelson, 1995).



AP: [...] Why do you describe them as hellish?

Michelle: Just like, I went through this phase where I looked about twenty years older than what I was, you know, like I just looked like an old woman, it was just horrible, just like, I don't know, where it came from that. I fancied this older look but it was just horrible and then because none of my friends are into make-up and none of us wore make-up so that didn't last long, so then I was into, I didn't wear make-up at all until I was about twenty.

The relationship between hairdresser and customer sometimes mirrored that of mother/daughter. In the following extract, Michelle discussed her graduation from maternal control of her hair fashioning into her paradoxically passive, almost infantilised state at the salon:

AP: How would you describe the relationship between you and this hairdresser?

Michelle: Well I think she sort of treated you like a grownup and she'd ask you what you wanted done instead of asking your mum, or - so you felt like a bit older and as if somebody was talking to you and doing what you wanted.

AP: And do you feel like she did listen to what you said?

Michelle: Hopefully not. [Laughter]

AP: So it was sometimes -

Michelle: No it would have been a dreadful [...]

AP: So did you feel like sometimes she was fashioning your hair in a way that it bore no resemblance to what you wanted, or did it generally turn out-?

Michelle: I never, ever went in with an idea, she just used to say, "*Do you fancy this? Do you fancy that?*" and I'd just go, "*Yes*".<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Although hair rites that marked a movement from childhood to adolescence were more prevalent, Ann discussed a dramatic refashioning in relation to her marriage break-up, and implied in her experience as a hairdresser that makeovers in such circumstances were also routine: "*I always wanted long hair but my hair was always too thin, and it didn't grow right, but funnily enough, and it's really odd because I was looking at a picture of myself the other day there, and I eventually grew my hair long when - it was just after I got separated from my husband, and, usually people have their hair cut at that stage, but what I did was, grew my hair, and grew my hair, and grew my hair, and dyed it blonde and I eventually had this long, blonde hair that I'd always, always wanted, and it seemed to be longer and it seemed to be thicker, and I just kept it, you know really quite long, and I kept it for a wee*



## In/appropriate self-fashionings

Participants expressed their views about the in/appropriateness of styles on the basis that they were 'too old' or 'too young'.<sup>50</sup> Changing hairstyles for this reason, as in Jenny's case, seemed less to do with an appreciation of the vagaries of fashion, she maintained her bouffant with hairpiece for more than fourteen years, but with a more socially implicit understanding of age appropriateness: *"That was my only hairdo - was my hair-piece that only- [...] But as I say, when I got older I didn't really suit it"*.<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Lohead frequently identified styles in magazines to instruct the hairdresser to copy but these were checked for age appropriateness: *"Yes she, [Anthea Turner] has, lovely hair and, but most of the others are too young for me so I have to model myself on the older--"*

The hairdresser's interpersonal not to say counselling skills were required to either implement or suggest changes where the abandoning of long-cherished styles were concerned.<sup>52</sup> Other stylists' notions of 'old' hairdos had frustrated Sandy, a hairdresser herself:

I find these days I don't know, maybe I go to the wrong places but I find them categorising me as an older woman and I'm trying to go in for something that will - and me earrings and everything that will give them a message that I don't want an old fashioned hairdo or that I do want something, a bit of trend in my hair or something you know, so I've just - there isn't any one place that I've been to twice.

But as a young trainee Sandy had herself categorised some specific customers' requests as 'inappropriate': *"I can think of just the odd sort of eccentric, older woman like every salon has one and who would come in and bring a picture say of Marilyn Monroe or something, and say, 'Do me like that darling' you know, and we'd go in the back and have a giggle and say, 'Who's going to break it to her that she'd need a lot more hair than that?'"*. Ann noted that it was usually younger customers who

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while and then I cut it, you know, that was it, sort of a thing I'd had, you know, [adopts an admonishing voice] 'You're too old for that!' [Laughter] But you've had a wee shot, and I was delighted to have had it!"

<sup>50</sup> By far a greater number than showed any concern about fashionability.

<sup>51</sup> Feelings of youthfulness were cited as one of the pleasures after a salon visit. For example Jenny expressed that after a visit to 'La Paris' she felt 'fresher' and 'younger'.

<sup>52</sup> Jenny reported that this had been done with due care and sensitivity when she had eventually been persuaded by Mrs. Martin to relinquish her hairpiece for 'an older style'. Ann had had experience of this with make-up regimes too: *"I would say what we find difficult we would maybe have an older lady coming in who has a fashion from 1962 and maybe bright turquoise eye shadow way up to her eyebrows, it's just doing absolutely nothing for her and really not suiting her at all, all spangly and everything and it's about trying to change - but you can't do that suddenly and can't hurt the person's feelings, do you know what I mean? So it's a very, very gradual process to sort of tease --"*





20. Fun in 'La Paris'.





21. Customers enjoy coffee and whisky under the dryers at 'La Paris'.



came into a hair or beauty salon with a star's style to copy and noted that, as with customers' identifying the right hairdresser, having found a style that worked women would remain loyal to it.<sup>53</sup>

Many older women placed great importance on maintaining a hair fashioning regime over and above other cosmetic acts. Mrs Lohead, who had an active life that included dieting and exercise, emphasised the importance of having her hair done regularly: *"I always consider it as part of my life and, you know I'm old now [...] so I make a bigger effort. I would certainly look at it, some part of me trying, trying not to get myself, if I didn't have the hairdos then that's a downward step"*.

## 5.4 (Cross) identifications and pleasures in hair fashioning

### Pleasures

Many women expressed pleasure in hair fashioning processes. The hairdressers who had experienced work related illnesses, poor pay and conditions, long hours and lack of union representation and might have had reason to voice the most displeasure were pragmatic but undeniably positive about their experiences. Customers expressed a range of pleasures in their visits to salons, colleges and other fashioning environments.<sup>54</sup> I also took pleasure in my visit to 'La Paris' and other salons and could see why many would become loyal customers. Treats were built into the framework of visits to 'La Paris' as described by hairdresser Irene, below. On my first visit chocolates, biscuits and tea were being offered free to all customers.<sup>55</sup>

While I was interviewing Eileen, to my surprise I overheard Mrs Martin offering further treats to customers:

AP: And what do you like about it?

Mrs. Martin: [In background to customer Cathy.] Can I offer you a whisky or sherry?

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<sup>53</sup> "I would say that young women would do that, they would come in and say they wanted a definite make-up style want to look like somebody and we would try to do that if we could and that might be eyebrow shapes changed all the time to keep up with what the fashion is whether they are thick and bushy or whether the a wee thin line and where that thin line is you know, as well - and we have to know how to do it, so I would say that what happens after that is that very often young women would get into a style so maybe they would copy Martine McCutcheon but then, when they are forty they are still doing it because it worked when they were that age -"

<sup>54</sup> For example, asked how she felt after leaving the hairdresser's Mrs. Lohead said she felt *"Great, I feel great, 'cause I look right, I always make sure I have it done for the weekend - because it doesn't matter how nice a suit you've got on, if your hair's not nice you might as well not bother"*.

<sup>55</sup> My interview data was interspersed with bursts of laughter, often entered into by the whole salon:

AP: Oh yes, okay, if you don't mind. [I am handed a cup of coffee and cake.] Thank you very much, that's lovely. So what's happening now, what's this stage?

Irene: Well, Eileen likes a setting lotion on to make her hair, em, er setting lotion on at this stage, and then rollers in -

Adele: Right.

Irene: -at this stage, and then in the dryer for about half an hour-

Adele: Right.

Irene: -and then have a cup of tea. [Laughter]



AP: Why do you have it done in that style?

Cathy: [In background to Mrs Martin] I can't take sherry.

Eileen: Well, I think I suit it that way, I used to have it permed and curly, but then I got it all cut short.

Mrs Martin: [In background to Cathy] [...] Whisky, with lemonade or what?<sup>56</sup>

For disabled customers like Gabrielle, visits to the hairdresser had become linked to issues of self-esteem as well as offering stress-free trips outside the house. She adopted a directive approach with her hairdresser:

Gabrielle: I always say to her, "*I don't want my ears showing too much*", I've got big ears. [Laughter] And I always say, "*I don't want a parting and just cover that thinness there*". And I always try - Oh, I always say, "*And try and make it full*", you know. [...] Why I like to have it done - I go every week now, to have my hair done and why I like it is because now I can't wear fashionable clothes really as I am now you know, I'm all this - [emphasises her stroke affected arm] like with my arm being like this now it falls off my shoulder and I have to keep pulling them up and I don't walk right so I think, I always think - So long as my hair's alright. [...] I feel as though I've got space, lots of space for myself and a bit of peace and I feel relaxed and - yes I do. [...] I like it when she's sort of behind me and she's doing my hair and she'll go like that [gestures pulling lock of hair over forehead] and bring it downwards with both her hands and if she doesn't like it she pulls it up a bit and covers - if there's a space anywhere and you know, really spends time on me you know. [...] Yes, I feel pampered and it's peaceful, you know, relaxing, yes.<sup>57</sup>

Participants defied my expectations in their willingness to discuss the pleasures they took in their appearance, after salon visits, as above or in Ettie's case 'unfashioned':

I love a French Roll as well with a wee bit of hair [indicates loose hair at the sides of her face] I always liked that. [...] I quite liked when it had tendrils sometimes and it's the dampness, when it's raining, in wee curls, there's certain hairdos - and I like the French Roll but I also like when

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<sup>56</sup> The visit took place in January and therefore there was some justification if it was needed for offering a wee dram for New Year although the interview was at 10.30am. Ellen accepted her drink whilst she was having her hair washed. Most other customers were given a large measure. One customer caused general hilarity when she stood up from under the dryer and pretended to stagger as if 'under the influence'.

<sup>57</sup> Jenny stated that she felt "*a different woman when I go out*" and recalled a time after one visit when a stranger "*made her day*" commenting on how good her hair looked and asking her where she had had it done.



my hair's shiny although it's losing its lustre now, but when it's shiny and long. I would say long hair was my favourite, just because it's looking like hair. I like hair to flow, I never, ever liked lacquered hair, it's funny that. I never, ever liked hair that looked as though it was just out the hairdressers. I always liked hair to flow and to move and to - Isn't that funny? But that's - not every hairdressers that's like that, but I like things kind of natural.

Apart from having her hair done to her satisfaction on her visits to Northend, Janey found the visits relaxing whereas Sandy suggested that at 'Marjory's' social pleasures for customers were paramount:

I think the average sort of, you know [...] the average shampoos and set, older woman, thirties to fifties pensioner, they got their hair cleaned really, cleaned and just neatly in place for the week, and they got the social thing and that was a really big thing you [...] I mean, I think for the customers it was massive really. I think the contact with other women and in all different degrees - [...] they got a lot more that was about touch and having someone pamper them you know, and that you know what - and they did say that "*Oh I love it when you're washing my hair you know I just love it*", and, "*You can rub a bit harder love, you can really dig in*" and all that and I think that - and they all said, I mean they didn't say - use words like therapeutic and so on, but they did say things like, "*Oh it does me good coming here*", you know and, "*I always feel better*" and, "*It's lovely to be pampered.*" and things like that.

Hairdresser participants demonstrated *joie de vivre*. Ettie discussed how she and her co-workers had managed to milk pleasure from a gruelling work regime, enjoying music and dancing in and out of the salon during the day. Ettie's first regular hairdressing job coincided with her discovery of rock and roll music:

That was my first. I could feel my spirit soaring, it was fantastic, before that it was, [...] - it was Guy Mitchell - [sings, "*I never felt more like singing the blues*"] but then it went on to Elvis and all, and terrific, music was great [indecipherable] jiving you had a coke and [...] At the Locarno [Ballroom], at lunchtime, it was fantastic [...] - and the figures were just, I mean all the girls - because that's what we did, we enjoyed it. Mr Jess [salon manager] used to go mad, "*Where are you all going?*", "*We'll be back, that's our lunch*", "*You canny all go at once*" and he'd grab maybe two but -<sup>58</sup>

Even for those spectating like Jean there were pleasures to be had at the salon: "*It's just where it was situated as well, you know, it was really nice you know, being able to go in and sit, they had nice seats you*

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<sup>58</sup> At Northend College the atmosphere was sociable and unlike my experiences at any other educational institution. Loud music was being 'DJ'd' by one of the hairdressing apprentices and some others, along with clients, whose ages ranged from teens to





22. Gabrielle's daughter Evelyn, whose hair was remembered as being like 'black grapes'.



*could actually sit on and wait, I would wait for my mum or I would go away and do something, come back [...] or even just sit and have a conversation you know”.*

Hairdressers expressed their vicarious pleasure in the delight of transformed customers and took pride in their skills, in the camaraderie and even, as Sandy suggested, the expressions of sensuality and sexuality in some salon contexts. Mother's described their pleasures in grooming their daughters and many women chose to fashion together, particularly for specific events or as part of a routine like Maureen's weekend regimes that had become treasured memories.<sup>59</sup> Daughters and mothers discussed their own often differing perspectives on the dis/pleasures derived from children's hair fashioning. Speaking of her mother's views on her hair Jean commented, *“My mum, she was very pleased with it [Jean's hair] obviously, and she went on and on and on about it [...] Oh, I was so lucky to, you know, have this curly hair, you know, and people have to go to the hairdressers and get a perm, and I just thought it was long and it was heavy and you know, I couldn't be bothered with it you know”.* Such vicarious pleasures were often attributed to or voiced by mothers who scorned vanity. Gabrielle said, *“Yes, I've got loads of memories. Evelyn's hair was dark, like it is now and it was naturally all ringlets and it was so nice that the lady across here, she's died now, an old lady, she said – [...] ‘Just look at that child's hair, its like a bunch of grapes’, that's how she described Evelyn's hair”.* Ettie noted how her hair had given pleasure to her children: *“Joseph always said, Joseph is my third son, ‘Big hair - Mum I like your hair big.’ If you pleased every son you'd be bald”* [Laughter]. Many women had taken pride and pleasure in approbation from friends and relatives and cherished moments enjoyed many years before when a new hairstyle had been admired or a feeling of glamour had been experienced. Significantly, it was Michelle, the self-identified feminist who provided the broadest range of accounts of albeit unequivocally guilty pleasures in hair and other cosmetic acts:

AP: Can you remember a point in your life when you first thought I'm really happy with that look?

Michelle: First time I went to the hairdressers.

AP: Right ok, and what did she do or he do?

Michelle: It was when it was the bob.

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seventy plus year olds, were singing along when I arrived. My own impression echoed Maureen's that, *“everybody's all nice to you, so they are”.*

<sup>59</sup> Maureen remembered: *“My wee sister, my pals, [...] we used to go to the Barrowlands [ballroom] and all that and we used to - she used to do my hair and all that then we used to go back out”.*



AP: Oh right that first time, when you went with your mum and your grandma and so on. So what sort of process can you remember? Tell me more about the hairdressers and what happened there.

Michelle: I don't really remember that much about it, just remember going to school and everybody going, "*Oh your hairs gorgeous, it's lovely, where did you get it done?*" and after that I took my friends to the hairdressers and we all started to go, and as I say Sheila and I both got our hair done.  
[Laughter]

This pleasurable feeling of transformation was repeated most weekends when Michelle's home was the venue for mass fashioning:

The pleasure is everybody being there all being together and all doing the same thing but - the pleasure is being together and doing it together, the pleasure isn't in actually applying the make-up because I hate doing that. I hate having to sit and do my hair. The pleasure is actually once it's all done and I put my outfit on and I look in the mirror and we always used to say to each other like, when we were all ready and we'll all be like, "*Oh you look good*" and you know, kind of thing and if somebody said that you would know that was you ready to go.

Michelle remembered an iconic moment of pleasure at looking at herself after a hairdressing session: "*I remember that hairdo because I remember actually being in a park in Shawlands and people saying to me, and I remember getting pictures of it as well, but I've got more of a memory actually getting it done in the hairdressers and being in the hairdressers and looking at it*".<sup>60</sup>

Gabrielle recalled an iconic memory from the 1960s:

Ron [husband] let me get ready and he was seeing to the boys and that - to bed and I was sat at the kitchen table, I was - with a big mirror - put all me make-up on expertly, trying to, and I thought, yes it looks nice, and a neighbour where we lived [...] called Betty came across and she said, "*Oh you do look nice, where are you going?*" she said, "*It doesn't look like you*". Because before that, before I started work, before, I was always poor, poorly dressed and well I looked a mess you know, I didn't look after myself or my hair really then because I'd got the two kids

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<sup>60</sup> Michelle's pleasures in fashioning extended into other related territories – her admission came with the proviso that she knew this further example of fashioning excess was 'unhealthy', 'freakish' and 'spooky' and 'funny':

Michelle: I'll tell you about my shoes right I must tell you this well- I've got over a hundred pairs, one hundred and fifty pairs of shoes.  
AP: You haven't.

Michelle: And they are lying in their boxes and this is what I get real pleasure from [Laughter] because I get pleasure from counting my shoes and looking at my shoes and everybody says I am a pure freak because if I'm feeling really down I look at my shoes and I'll count them all again and I'll put them into different - I mean there is something not healthy about it but I enjoy doing it. I love my shoes or - even when I was on holiday a couple of years ago, I brought back 21 pairs of shoes and they were all in their boxes. I need my boxes I'm really, it is a bit spooky actually but it's funny.



and I was busy you know. [...] And she couldn't believe it was me. I said "*Oh we're going to this dinner dance at work*". When they saw me at work they said "*Oh Gabrielle you look beautiful. You look stunning*", you know and all that, and I was so pleased with it all.

Jean, whose fashioning reflected influences from her grandmother and father, reiterated themes of fashioning as sensory and therapeutic.<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth offered me a new insight into the ways women have derived pleasure fashioning. Iconic and narrative memories have been linked to notions of the self and stars. In this account, she discusses in detail an enduring image of a stranger:

Yes, well you have to remember that this, that Inchwall [council estate] was a very, very working-class housing estate so it was extremely unusual to find anybody who looked in any way extraordinary - [...] it would be when I was maybe, I would say about eight, nine or ten so that would be 1950s and we used to see this woman quite often either on the bus or walking through Inchwall. She was always on her own and I would say she seemed quite old to me at that time, but I suppose looking back she was only maybe in her thirties, but she was very unusual because she had this hairstyle that I can only describe as being like an 18th century - [Laughter] aristocracy wig. It was, her hair was naturally grey, wasn't tinted but it was always like piled up on her head in that pompadour shape and also it had [Laughter]- she had like two fat ringlets always to complete it, just like you saw in like fairy storybooks -

AP: I was going to ask you whether that had anything to do like - did you find that hairdo? How would you describe -?

Elizabeth: - Cinderella -

AP: - right, but was that -

Elizabeth: - illustrations -

AP: - alluring to you or was that -

Elizabeth: - Oh I thought it was -

AP: - or was it not nice? How would you describe your reaction to this -?

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<sup>61</sup> Jean: How I maintain myself? Moisturisers and, I mean, I still wear Indian oils and, I mean, I use deodorants and hair shampoo and conditioner you know, I'm trying to put it into some sort of, you know, [indecipherable- uniform?] of what I do but it is really important to me how I look, to a degree but how I smell also because I've always had that sort of influence.  
AP: Would you describe those things, those grooming rituals as a chore or are they a pleasure?



Elizabeth: Well, I think it was one of amazement really. The actual construction of it was absolutely amazing so that made me wonder how much time she spent on it and it always looked the same but also it struck me as incredibly brave of this woman because it did appear to me and no doubt everyone else as incredibly old-fashioned, so, so unusual and it was made more unusual by the fact that in every other respect this woman looked so ordinary, so, so modest and quite you know, in every other way - so it was a really weird juxtaposition if you like of dress, looks and then this amazing hair.

AP: So that's really interesting, well, first because you remembered her from forty odd years ago, you remember this hairdo - I mean did you ever speak to this woman?

Elizabeth: No, no she was as I say, she was always on her own, although if I think hard enough I think she, I think once or twice I did see her with her husband, but I think they were a couple with no children and yes, and I think they - I just gained this impression, I don't know, maybe from talking about her to me Mum, that they were a quiet couple who lived on their own.<sup>62</sup>

## Identifications

Identifications with film, TV, music and other stars were discussed by participants. For Maureen, stars had provided an array of models for hair and glamour fashionings. Contrary to feminist orthodoxy, she had seen these as relatively achievable:

Maureen: Aye, I always wanted my hair like Julia Robertson.

AP: Julia Roberts?

Maureen: Right, I always wanted it to be like that and I was like that - I wish I'd never got my hair cut now, or else I like her hair that Heather Lockwood [Locklear?] [...] I wear her gear, I've got a jacket of hers but because I've put on the weight now I cannae get into all my slim stuff because - I says, right I'll just go back on a diet now [...] Aye, no she's nice. I used to like it wasnae - remember that Pamela Ewing who used to be on Dallas? [...] I honestly think - and I says to my husband, I wish I had the money.

Younger Northend trainees and customers used photos of contemporary stars in their salon visits. Eva and Sue were in their early twenties:

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Jean: I find it's a pleasure to smell and look nice. I think it's a pleasure [...] and it's a nice relaxing feeling to, sort of, take time for yourself as well you know.

<sup>62</sup> A memory work text recorded: *A had loved the hair, excessive fashioning and the real name of the actress who played a hairdresser in TV's Crossroads. Her hair was ornately fashioned coil upon coil. The actress's name on the credits, Zeph, seemed*



AP: What about you? [To Eva, lying having a facial] Have you ever taken a photo into hairdressers and said, "*I'd like my hair like that?*"

Eva: Oh aye, Courteney Cox. [Laughter]

AP: Have you? [To beauty therapist, Sue]

Sue: Jennifer Anniston.

Eileen, in her fifties cited Sophia Loren, Joan Collins and Elizabeth Taylor as models whereas Mrs. Lohead remembered Hollywood stars of the 1940s influencing her own fashioning during her Marcel wave period:

Mrs. Lohead: One of my, the ones that I admired, as a young woman were Joan Crawford. [...] I liked her because she was very er, sort of mannish type, she had broad shoulders, she was the first to wear those padded shoulders. [...] But I admired her, and later on Betty Grable [...] She was more of the curly type and Vivien Leigh, I saw her in *Gone with the wind*, again, Who else? And Olivia De Haviland – [...] They were all beautiful. Lana Turner, Linda Gray and the English ones, the one who was in *The wicked lady*, Margaret Lockwood.<sup>63</sup>

Mrs. Lohead caused amusement when she commented,

Yes for a while I thought that Mrs Thatcher's hair was lovely. [General Laughter]

AP: Did you ask the hairdresser to do you a Margaret Thatcher?

Mrs. Lohead: Often, aha, I've done that once or twice, brought in a wee photo of people I admire.

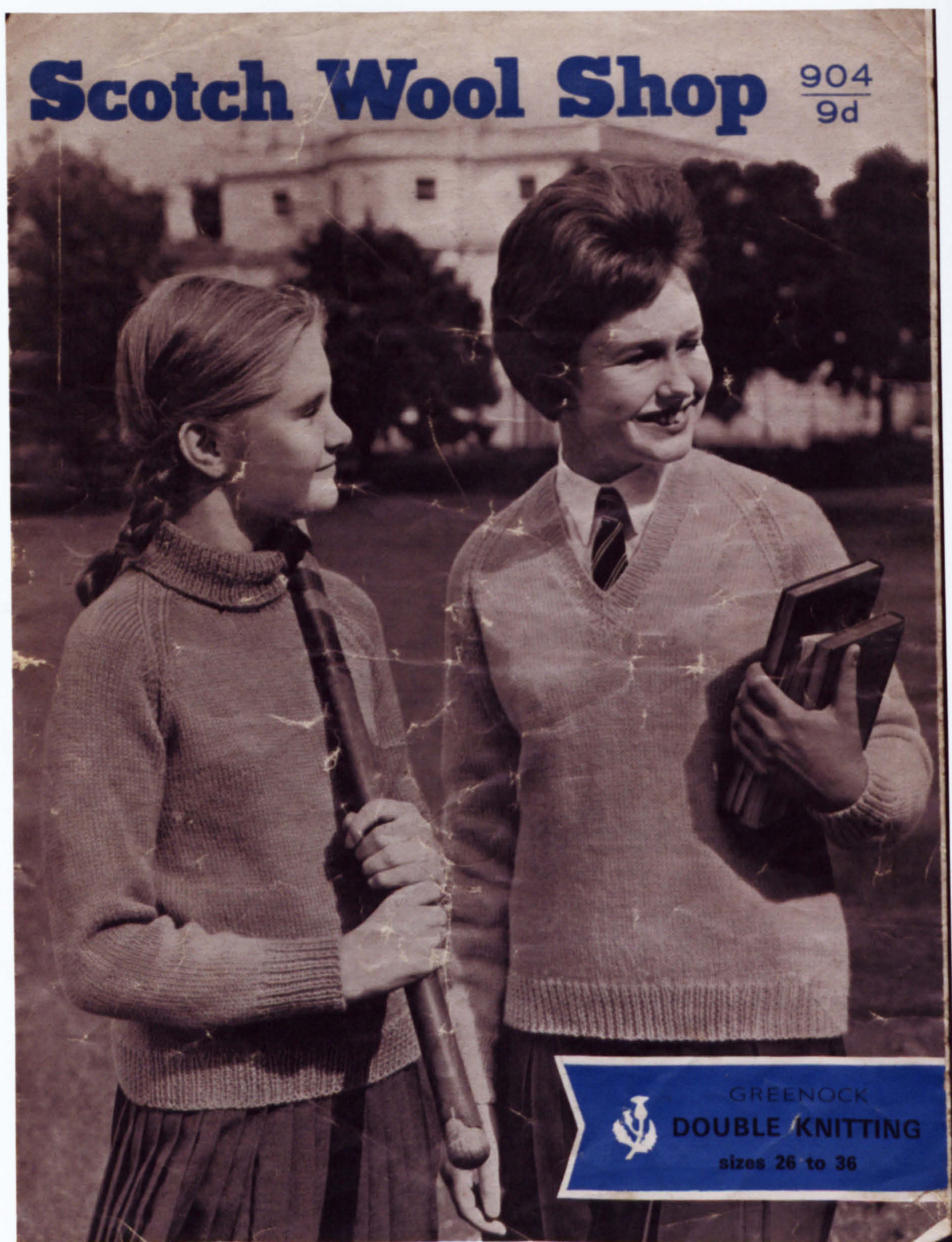
Aspirations to have a middle-class 'natural' look underpinned Ann's pragmatic identifications with female stars from the 1970s: "*I suppose I always sort of liked the Kate Bush sort of - I never had the hair that could do that, you know what I mean? I always wanted legs like Jerry Hall, I mean you*

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to capture perfectly the sense of exoticism and uncommonness of her hairstyle. For some few years 'A' had insisted that Zeph be added to her already long string of made up, exotic middle-names.

<sup>63</sup> Stacey noted of her respondents that, "the types of stars who were most frequently imitated in terms of posture, movement and gesture tended to be those associated with the more 'confident', 'powerful' feminine identities such as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford"(Stacey, 1994, p. 167)





23. Scotch Wool Shop knitting pattern, 1967.



*can't have that, I mean there are some things you can't have". [Laughter]*<sup>64</sup> Ann's most enduring identification was with Joni Mitchell. She conceded that Jerry Hall's 'artifice' was a relatively more achievable look than Joni Mitchell's: "*The natural look, yes, aha, [Laughter] the sort of wake-up-and-she-looks-like-that nauseating thing, aha*".<sup>65</sup>

Although feminist research has touched upon identifications between stars and their audiences I was less prepared for the range of accounts of identifications by proxy. In a discussion that preceded our taped interview Gabrielle had disclosed that in the 1970s she had once asked the hairdresser to cut her daughter's hair in the style of the winner of the *Eurovision Song Contest*.<sup>66</sup> Evelyn, Gabrielle's daughter joined in the discussion:

Gabrielle: Yes was it a French singer? And you had it –

Evelyn: Like a bob or something.

Gabrielle: Yes, it was sort of a fringe and it sort of came out like that and went under and just come round there –

Evelyn: It was like that when I started school.

Mrs Lohead collected images of stars for her daughter to model herself upon: "*No, the last one I was cutting out was for my daughter, Anthea Turner, I was saying to Margaret my daughter, I think Margaret, you would suit that. So I cut it out and she took it to her hairdressers*".<sup>67</sup>

Hairdressers applied stars' styles on willing and unwilling customers since the birth of the salon.<sup>68</sup> Gabrielle was transformed by this process as were so many other young women in the 1960s:

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<sup>64</sup> She discussed her identification with Joni Mitchell on a range of registers:

Ann: My big heroine was, and still is Joni Mitchell.

AP: And tell me about what - how the way she fashions herself what you found attractive?

Ann: Well, what I found attractive, I mean I loved her music and I loved her lyrics so that was - I also loved the way she looked and still looks, I mean, she was like a natural beauty, she had naturally blonde hair, and a naturally lovely face and very musical and artistic you know.

<sup>65</sup> Our discussion had generated a more in depth account from Ann about her own working-class identification – shifting in this passage from past to present tense: "*Well, I was very working class, lived in a council house [...] My Dad came from a family who had been monied, if you know what I mean, and had lost all their money and the generation before him – but my grandpa and grandma had money and then had ended up up a close in Glasgow which was a big shame. My mum came from up a close in Govan [...] so I am working class, yes, but aspired to the Joni Mitchell middle-class look.*"

<sup>66</sup> I had been surprised by my Mum's revelation that whilst knitting a garment for me as a young girl she had fantasised about me growing up to be like one of the knitting pattern models illustrated right, opposite.

<sup>67</sup> Haug et al interpreted parental fashioning of girl children's hair as unequivocally a function of the controlling and ordering of young women's sexualisation and the broader socialisation of women by Church and State (Haug et al, 1983, pp. 91-113).

<sup>68</sup> Dieudonne describes the context of early twentieth century France: "*Only the old women still wore grey, lifeless hair: the young ones had all gone Hollywood*" (Dieudonne quoted in Zdatny, 1997, p. 376).



By that time there was a few hairdressers started to open, different salons you know, and when I had my long hair she just used to sort of shampoo it and put it in big rollers then let it down, and I thought that was the bees-knees you know, all nice and shiny [...] and then this style came what they called Helen Shapiro style, and it was sort of short and back-combed, yes, like a - not quite bee-hived and this young girl at the salon she said *"Why don't you have it done like that for your party, Xmas party at work?"*

For both customers and hairdressers alike, star styles were used as a form of shorthand:

Sandy: and the best thing was, when I went to Jersey and I was really amazed but there was a really good hairdresser and it wasn't sort of trendy looking place and she said to me, [...] *"Well, what do you want?"* and I said, *"Well I want some layers in it"* and so on and she said, *"How do you want it to look? Whose do you want it to look like?"* and I said, *"I don't know just sort of layered but sticky-out a bit."* and she said, *"Well like a kind of wild Anthea Turner?"* she said and I said, *"Yeah I'll have that, I'll have that yeah"* and she did and she did me these sort of these little flick-ups but it was like, that's all right because I know they can lie down but sometimes they might stick up you know.

AP: [...] so, a wild Anthea Turner [Laughter]

Sandy: I think, even better is a wild Tina Turner. [Laughter]

Elizabeth remembered the role of film magazines, principally *Picturegoer*, in fuelling her identification and fascination with star fashionings *"and there were always lots of full-sized head shots you know, of women, so it was quite easy you know, to look at you know, look at the shape of their lipstick and that sort of thing"*<sup>69</sup> whilst Michelle used texts produced by the hair industries to help construct a desired look.<sup>70</sup> Although identifications with film and TV stars were widespread in participants' accounts, many women remembered family members and friends having created an equally compelling or iconic image with which they came to identify, for example Pauline, blonde for twenty years, had identified with her peroxided,

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth's comments on her gaze in this instance refuse to be consigned readily to feminist interpretations of the objectification inherent in theories of 'fragmentation' (of women's bodies by media), 'identification' and 'fetishisation'.

<sup>70</sup> *"I was really, really into my hair. I really loved having my hair done, I really loved getting the colours done and styles and I was really aware of what was out and what was in and I was always worried, I didn't want to look old-fashioned so I used to get hair magazines"*. Michelle found this 'research' pleasurable. She rarely bought hair magazines, preferring to leaf through them in shops. Whilst contributing a mass of detail about in/appropriate modes of self-fashioning hair, clothes, shoes and interiors Michelle was nevertheless often reluctant to cite her influences, but in the construction of identifications from 'hippy' to 'clubby' to 'trendy' she conceded that this was undertaken by *"... kind of looking at other people and seeing what they were wearing and friend's, magazines, TV, things"*.



beehived hairdresser aunt. Ettie had also had a range of inspiring models.<sup>71</sup> Jean explained why she had identified herself with the tough, dyed blonde girls in her peer group: *"They seemed to be a lot more outgoing and a lot more confident than what I was, and I think this was what I was trying to instil in myself because I was always very quiet and shy and all that kind of thing and I didn't have a lot of confidence and I tried to - I mean a lot of time I had my own ways of things you know, but I decided I'm going to try this and see what it looks like you know"*.

For Sandy, information about constructing a lesbian feminist image came from identifications with 'butch' or 'dykey' lesbian feminists on the so-called scene:

When I sort of got onto the lesbian scene properly and it was about choosing and choices and what I wanted it was - I was 26 really and I remember that when I felt comfortable with how I looked I did sort of have my hair cut really short, and it was - and I mixed with so many sort of dykey women and I remember, I don't know, I remember feeling a bit daunted about the importance of, you know, going, I remember the first time I went into a lesbian bar and I thought it was mixed, I thought there were men in there you know, I thought that some of them were men you know, in their appearance, you know, and then I suddenly realised it was all women who looked like this you know, feeling a bit daunted by it, but things that made me change and become happy with my identity [...] with my dykey hair-do you know and my one earring in and all that kind of thing thinking yeah I like how I look, I'm part of it and I'm happy with it and I belong and I'm proud of how I look you know.

The denouement in memories of pleasure in achieving a state of glamour was frequently cited as being the moment when others sought to copy it. Gabrielle's pleasure culminated in the recognition of her successful transformation by her friend Lily and others: *"She said, 'Oh I wish I could have mine cut like that' and then as the months went on different ones kept having theirs cut like - yes"*.

Michelle's self-effacement failed to conceal her pleasure in being the one with whom friends identified:

I think a lot of it had to do with when I used to get my hair done everyone would go, *"Oh God your hair's amazing, it's lovely."* the boys and the girls - and I think it's because people were noticing me and usually most people, girls' hair was a bit of, you know long or not really much style but because I have a style then people started going, I think they weren't modelling

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<sup>71</sup> *"My aunty Eileen that looked like a Spanish - she was lovely, aha, Gracie Branigan in America, Betty who went to live in America, she made her own clothes, put her hair up, she was glamorous, big high heels, shoes, matching her dress"*.



themselves on me, but I think they just fancied having a trendy look that people would comment on.<sup>72</sup>

Identifications with the hairstyles of others were strongly felt by Ann from school age on: *"I think it is your peer group, I do, I do. I think that was definitely - in fact I mean, right up to now I'm still thinking about things I used to covet at school, you know girls that had a special sort of hairdo, or, 'How can I get that', do you know what I mean?"* [Laughter]<sup>73</sup>

Identifications were often with excessive femininity, ostensibly refusing both Modernist and feminist taste:

Elizabeth: Well I always marvelled and was thrilled and so longed myself for the kind of hair that I used to see in fairy illustration books even - if - it wasn't so much the pompadour thing, it was more like medieval and Victorian, yes, because these were the kind of story books there weren't any modern story books at that time, I mean, that was a fairly late development wasn't it? Children's - in the area of children's literature, but I did have so many books with Victorian illustrations and I often wondered why women and in particular myself somehow in the 20th century didn't have these yards of thick, you know, hair, especially, I especially loved and still do in fact - [Laughter] - and wish I had that very profuse hair which is like slightly curly or slightly wavy you know, like Irish hair I suppose or whatever or you saw in the Pre-Raphaelites - you see in the Pre-Raphaelite painting you know, I always thought that was the epitome, not of glamour, I think pompadour was definitely glamour, it was quite different from, from the natural - so I always I did, very quickly, I developed the idea that glamour was not, not natural.

[...] when I first, when women first started appearing to me as glamorous they were women in film, film stars, none of whom had the kind of loose, profuse hair that I admired so much, I'm talking about women like Sophia Loren, Gina Lollabrigida, who, we mentioned Elizabeth Taylor, all the women of that, all the film stars, Lana Turner, I mean she was still very popular at that time, Joan Crawford, they were all women with obvious permed hairdos, immaculate hairdos, there was no loose hair, I think the first, the first film star who ever impressed me, it was Brigitte Bardot but that -

AP: I was going to say when you described -

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<sup>72</sup> In contrast, having her style copied by others had negative class associations for Janey when remembering fashioning herself in the 1940s.

Janey: Yes, my girlfriend used to come to me and we would get the make-up on and your hair done and she would do mine and I would do hers and things like that.

AP: And would you ever dress in a similar way as well or -

Janey: No I didn't like that sometimes they tried to copy me, but I didn't like them doing that, I liked to be individual, I didn't like anyone to say well they've come out a sale, I liked to be individual.

<sup>73</sup> Her fascination fuelled her future career: *"I didn't really know what I was meant to do, I hadn't a clue what I was going to do, but I know that I was [Laughter] from early on I knew I was quite obsessed with people's hair and I would sit completely ignoring whatever nonsense was going on in French or German and I would be studying people thinking 'They would be better with a different hair colour', or 'I could cut that', or I'd be looking at people's faces thinking what I would do with it or, that kind of thing -"*



Elizabeth: - that was little bit later.

AP: So there actually were figures later that you sort of associated with, with this earlier identification?

Elizabeth: Oh yes. [...] And it rep- and to me that's what it took to be feminine. I thought of beauty in terms of the like the carnival queens or the Rose Queens or the May Queens that especially in the big Roman Catholic Whitsun festival where they always had you know these queens, you know, these girls who were selected you know like Rose Queens and had their attendants and they were on big floats and all this sort of thing going through Doncaster at this time [...] every Whit. So I thought of beauty in those sort of terms and also in Virgin Mary in the nativity play you know it was always [Laughter] the girl with the blue eyes and the long curls or the long blonde hair.

For Elizabeth, in her late fifties, and Maureen in her forties a desire for long hair had translated into having or planning hair extensions.<sup>74</sup> Maureen had been costing up the job and imagining the effect:

AP: So if you got that, if you got as many hair extensions as you want, as long as you wanted what colour would you get do you think?

Maureen: All different colours, I wouldn't go for blonde because blondes now, I think it's got played out, too many people's got blonde, so I'd go for something nobody's got, every different colour and have it all curls [describes the big shape with her hands].

AP: So you'd actually be having it long?

Maureen: Long, aye.

## Being blonde

Being blonde carried specific significations for participants.<sup>75</sup> Considered the antithesis of feminist taste and counter-revolutionary by many of the early spokespersons, being dyed blonde is

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<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth had had hair extensions for over 15 years.

<sup>75</sup> For example, catharsis, it being 'too played out', 'hard', and 'inappropriately' youthful.



freighted with a huge cultural significance.<sup>76</sup> With the notable exception of Pauline, who derived pleasures in performing as her in the college's annual cabaret, Marilyn Monroe the dyed blonde archetype rarely featured as a clearly defined point of identification, but was used as a descriptive term as in Sandy's account of her own past bloneness:<sup>77</sup>

By the time I was eighteen [in the 1960s] I first had, it wasn't, I didn't go full blonde, it was just millions and millions of blonde streaks and actually when I look at the photographs it did look as though it was all blonde because I'd got that many streaks but that was when I was eighteen but it was short hair but when I think about it now I mean you know I could find a photograph and actually when I think now it was like a Princess Diana then [...] it was like sort of a bob, like a graduated bob and it was quite fab and then, after that I grew my hair longer and then I did have my hair bleached all over, yeah, and it was like a curly sort of, you know Marilyn Monroey sort of type [...] I mean I just - I loved being blonde, I really did and I can't imagine why I ever gave that up in a way, but I loved it you know, it was just, I felt like I looked better, you know everything about me and it affected my personality in a way that I did think that - that was the time when I sort of liked myself more and as though people you know, really treated me a bit differently when, you know.

Dark roots in dyed blonde hair continue to create anxieties for some women as Maureen noted:

*"But then I got my hair bleached once because I went back to blonde, so after I got my blonde streaks*

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<sup>76</sup> Even the lodestone for this research, the peroxide blonde beehive is a hairstyle with wide and conflicting cultural resonances embodied in the iconic pantheon: Barbara Windsor, Viv Nicholson, Julie Goodyear, Dusty Springfield, Myra Hindley, Dolly Parton, the style indubitably read as low class and increasingly appropriated as camp. Blondes continue to be mythologised in popular and critical collections (for example, Marsh, 1999; Ilyin, 2000; Phillips, 2000 and Pitman 2003). Discussing the Society Blonde who when aged: "*decides to opt for platinum hues*" journalist Judy Rumbold stated that, "*Gone are the days when a demure blue rinse or well groomed shampoo and set symbolised dignified old age and moneyed elegance, In this country, coyly named shades like Green Wavy, Ticked Pink and Saucy Beige have been exiled to gorbimey eel and pie land and people called Queenie*" (Rumbold, 1990, p. 19). Donatella Versace's iconic look is routinely read as 'hard'. Her non ironic bleached style I see as typifying the excessive, glamorous, extended hair described in Maureen's fantasy. Versace started dyeing her hair aged eleven: "*My brother Gianni was originally against it and my mother would have preferred me to be more conservative, but in the end my blonde, tough side won through. At the time, the fashion was all about the Courreges image defined by the dark bob rather than long blonde hair, so my decision was more personal than fashionable*" (Versace, 1999, p. 4).

The blonde beehive is frequently used to symbolise working-class female culture for example in the drag creations Lily Savage and Pauline Calf. Hindley with peroxidised beehive became "*A medusa, a gorgon*" (Glancey, 2002, p. 5). Hindley came closest to being appropriated for post-modernity if not camp by Marcus Harvey in the *Sensation* show of 1997 (Royal Academy of Arts) Interestingly it was Harvey's piece rather than the iconic 'original' that *The Guardian* alone chose as a front page image announcing Hindley's death (*The Guardian*, 16 November, 2002).

Cox has charted the historical and cultural evolution of dyed blondes: "*In the 1930s [following the racist undertones to the promotion of the Aryan peroxide glamour look 'an exclusionary look of segregation'] as more and more women succumbed to the peroxide bottle, bloneness began to lose its high status and the disparaging term 'bottle blonde' began to be used. Cheap hair bleaching with thinly disguised black roots began to be associated with the 'easy' working-class woman. (Cox, 1999, p. 160)[...] With bloneness a little bit of lightening was considered acceptable but too much and a woman risked appearing a bit 'fast', lower class, a sporter of an artificial disguise that was unnatural and cheating, misrepresenting age or 'natural' beauty. In fact considering whether to bleach, dye or tint was such a sensitive issue that the practice was not openly referred to until the 1950s and women used the code word 'treatment' instead*" (ibid. p. 161).

<sup>77</sup> The images on the walls of 'La Paris' were all of glamorous but anonymous hair models, the exception was an image of Marilyn Monroe, situated above the hairdryers.



*it wasnae anybody's fault because you see the roots were coming in really, really heavy because I'm actually dark hair so, so I had to come up here and get it all done, so I just kept it the red colour".*<sup>78</sup>

Pauline, inspired by a sister-in law who looked *"like a Barbie doll"* felt less good when not-blonde. Blonde hair had made her feel *"Dead glam, but I went to get streaks again a couple of weeks ago and I felt dead depressed and so I'm getting it dyed again"*. She noted that her fashioning of long blonde hair has been unequivocally for herself. Ellen had also been a dyed blonde for over twenty years. She discussed going blonde as, in part, a desire not to be thought of as a redhead, and an aberration from her attempts otherwise to stay 'natural':<sup>79</sup>

Hair, I was always dyeing my hair. I dye my hair and my hair has got quite a reddish tinge to it and one night Brenda and I were out somewhere I can't remember, and we got these two lads on the bus home and one of them said to me, [...] *"Oh I didn't know you had red hair"*. Now, I must have been about, oh, probably about 15 coming on 16 then and I thought, *'I'd better start dyeing my hair'* because I did not – because my mother always had this aura of red haired Catholics that was simply, my father's a red haired Catholic you know, but that was a kind of thing then, red hair, especially when you had red hair and freckles, [...] – and I've been a blonde ever since really. [Laughter]<sup>80</sup>

The obstinacy of the association between a non-ironic dyed bloneness and a perception of (working-class) women's stupidity has outlived punk's reclamation, the appropriation of so-called trailer trash by couture fashion, queering and the dynamics of postmodernity.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Some attitudes to appropriate fashioning, for example the badness of roots– prevailed even in Michelle's clubby milieu, where artifice and excess were otherwise welcomed: *"I just can't have roots. God, I mean its all right if, I don't know, every time I've got my hair dyed it's always been, it looks dyed, its obviously dyed, it's not like subtle dye, so its alright, the point is to show that you've got colour in your hair, but you still can't have roots because it just looks crap, it just looks crap"*. The overriding anxiety concerning roots appears to be based on issues of class and respectability. Roots might imply that a person cannot afford to have their hair re-dyed.

<sup>79</sup> Ellen: I was never a great make-up – I wear make-up now because I have to, but really I was never, I never wore make-up at all, occasionally I would put lipstick on but that was it, but then that was all to do with that very kind of natural whatever, and luckily enough I didn't have to, I had quite good skin tone and I was perfectly happy.

<sup>80</sup> The heightened context of sectarianism in Glasgow may have further influenced Ellen's decision to shed her natural colour. In the context of the development of the queer turn in media representations of feminine excess, big hair and in particular, dyed blonde big hair has had a significant amount of so-called playful media attention. The use of star names as nouns or adjectives by participants is characteristic in much of this ironic, self-conscious mock-appropriation of working-class women's culture: *"What style would I like, asks Lindsay [Hairdresser at 'Crazy Cutz' salon where Big Brother's Helen formally worked] What sort of question is that? Forget the 'Rachel', the 'Kate', the 'Meg' the only style in town is the fluffy, bouncy, giggly, blonde bimbo of a hairdo immortalised by that Big Brother woman. I want a Helen"*. (Buttolph, 2001, p. 16).

<sup>81</sup> Natural blondes remain vigilant and defensive lest they are co-opted. Mariella Frostrup, keen to establish herself as a serious journalist asked ironically – 'Can a slave to her hair colour really judge a literary prize and present *Panorama*?' (Frostrup, 2000, pp. 1-2). Blondes have established a Blonde Legal Defence Club in the US to help dispel dumb blonde myths (Glasgow Herald, 9 July, 2001, p. 7).



## Transformation

For some participants, fashioning a transformation had been a process impacting upon other important aspects of identity.<sup>82</sup> This was clearly illustrated in Michelle's accounts of consecutive transformations based on diverse identifications. Michelle made explicit through her articulations of meaningful fashion/ings her desire *not* to be identified with specific groups/stylings:

AP: So you were saying there that you'll do everything not to look like a certain -

Michelle: Student.

AP: Why is that in particular do you think?

Michelle: I think because I've been a student for so long. [Laughter]

AP: Ok, so you want to be different from -

Michelle: I don't want to be a student. [...] at the end of school I used to be like hyper trendy with my clothes and my hair and stuff [...] then when I left school I turned into a hippy so I didn't wear make-up and my hair was just horrible, actually it was long and dull and lank it wasn't nice and I stopped really bothering about my hair then actually.

AP: When you say it wasn't nice was that - is that you speaking now about that time?

Michelle: Because it wasn't highlighted or anything it was my hair and nothing done to it just long.

AP: And do you think you were fashioning yourself then?

Michelle: Well that was a deliberate effort to look hippy. [...] I went to a lot of effort to make sure I looked like a kind of 60s hippy and not this grungy hippy. [...] I'll kind of put it into context of how I first got into it all. I was in the hippy dippy stuff, no make-up, straight hair, I put a lot of effort into my clothes then I started getting into the club scene. [...] So going clubbing, so I couldn't go clubbing dressed like a hippy, so I gradually, well not gradually but quickly changed my style.<sup>83</sup>

Michelle, Gabrielle, Jean, Maureen, Janey and others discussed the pleasures and sensations associated with memories of undergoing a fashioning transformation.<sup>84</sup> Gabrielle's most readily

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<sup>82</sup> Identifications that are mimetic necessitate transformation (Stacey, 1994, p. 167).

<sup>83</sup> Michelle was a Sociology student moving from undergraduate into graduate study.

<sup>84</sup> AP: When you'd done your grooming you'd got your plum suit on and then you put the patchouli oil on, I mean, can you remember what that made you feel like?



recalled moment of glamour and satisfaction in fashioning took place almost fifty years ago and had become a narrative whereby the key elements of the transformation model rehearsed by several participants were in place, namely, fear and trepidation of what the transformation would entail, relinquishing trust to another, enduring the process, the pleasurable outcome, followed by the praise of others. Her reluctant agreement with the hairdresser's suggestion of a Helen Shapiro cut had been followed by anxiety:

I said, "*I don't know*" and she cut it and cut it and while she was cutting it - it was wet - I was looking at myself in the mirror and she cut it off and I was crying, I thought - I saw it all dropping on the floor and I thought, Oh my God. What's it going to look like? and she put it in rollers, big rollers, even though it was so short and it wasn't permed then you know, and put me under the dryer. I was crying my eyes out under the dryer, she didn't know, and she took me out of the dryer and she got the brush and a comb and she sort of backcombed it and it was all shaped and all lovely. Oh, and I was so pleased with it.

In a further moment of illumination, and the recognition of a shared understanding, Ettie provided this unexpected insight:

I loved Doris Day when I was young, I loved Doris Day, the Deadwood Stage in Calamity Jane and how they transformed the house, I always loved being able to transform things. I could always look at - and I loved Lloyd Loom chairs and things and I used to go round the Barras [Glasgow market] and buy things and transform them. I got an old Lloyd Loom basket and a lovely chair like - and an Austin chair, high backed, horsehair and springs, and I stripped it and resprayed it, I love to transform.

AP: That very scene that you are talking about, you know, when they go in and there's that little shack -<sup>85</sup>

Ettie: Dirty old shack, yeah -

AP: - and then it's - well, they do a song don't they - while they are cleaning, and then finally, I love it when they get all the curtains -

Ettie: - Gingham -

AP: Gingham, and the tablecloth -

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Jean: I just felt like I could conquer. [Laughing] I felt so good, I just felt so confident, do you know what I mean? And I just thought - and you know, and I would go out there, you know, head up, felt really confident.

<sup>85</sup> An episode A had generated in a memory work text.



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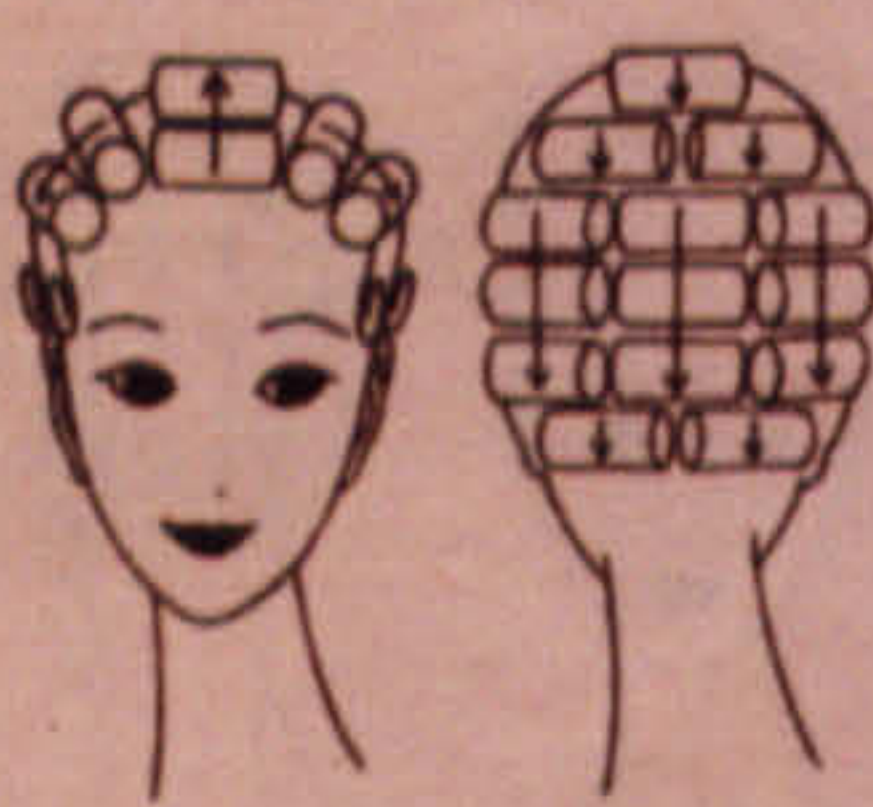
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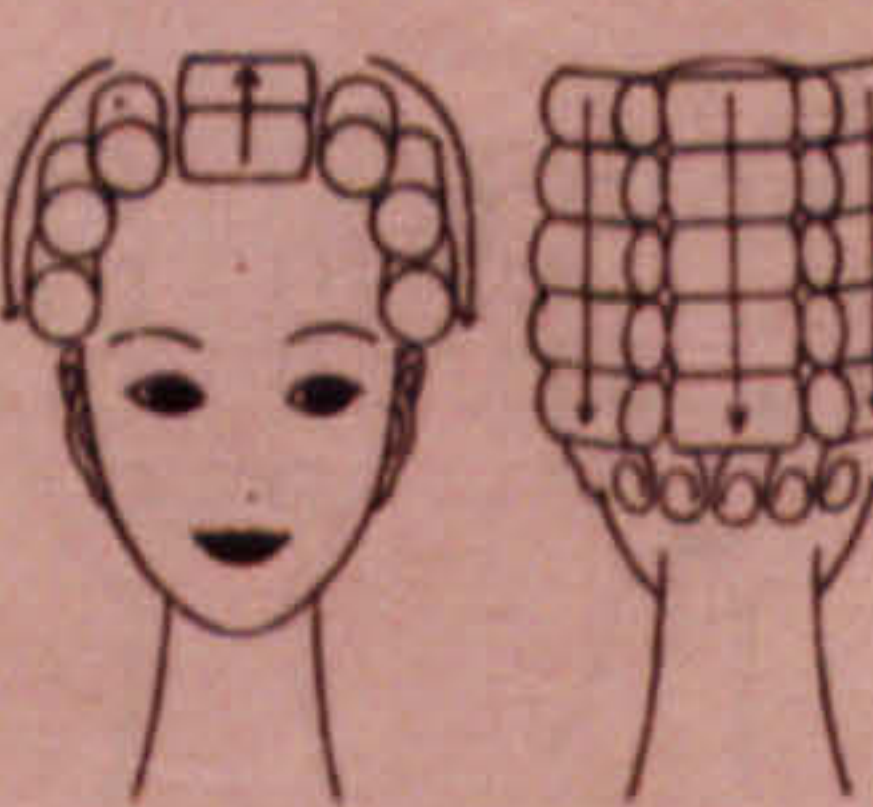
24. Excessive hairpieces advertised in US magazine, *Motion Picture*, 1965, page 59.



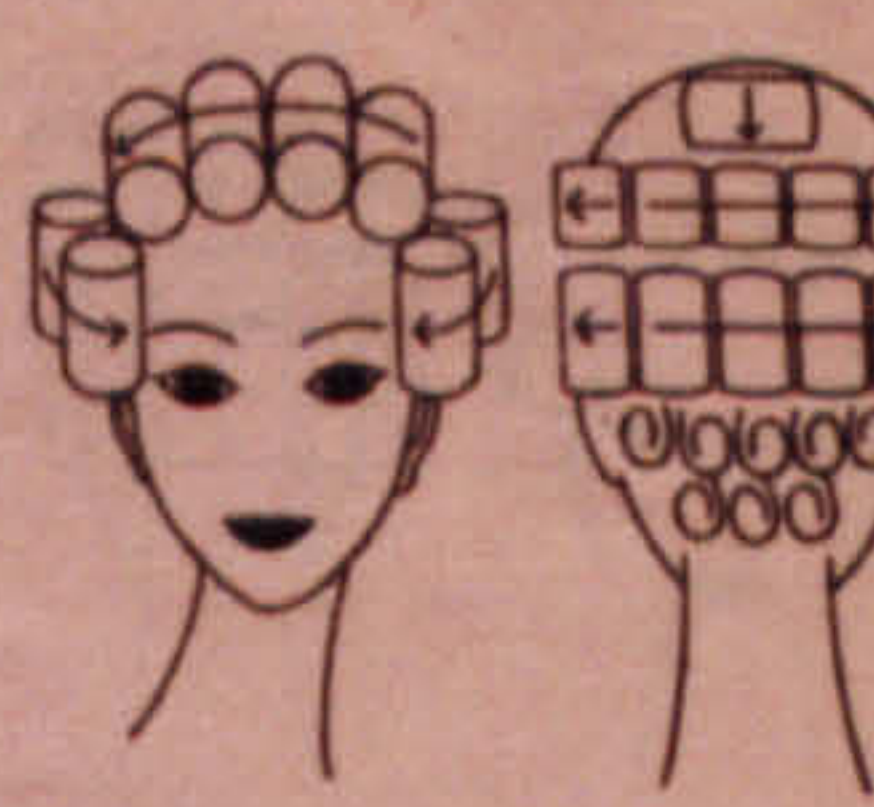
**44**

*In the Grecian mood is this elegant, romantic style for long hair. Use large rollers and open clip curls for the set. Brush the hair smoothly back and secure at the crown, leaving a soft wave at each temple. Divide the rest of the hair into sections and fold into a mass of ribbon-like curls at the nape, letting just one curl escape.*



**45**

*Is your face too round? Try this style with a side parting and fullness above the ears for added height. To brush out, brush the hair straight back. The left side is draped over the ear and the right is brushed past the top of the ear and curled forward. Pin the back hair into a low French pleat. Brush the crown hair over the pleat and then fold the ends under. Gently push the top hair to the left side in a soft wave.*



**46**

*Sleek sweep with a ruffle of side curls gives a tom-boy look. Set on jumbo rollers and note directions carefully. Brushing out, first pull the hair smoothly across front and curve fringe over brow. Mass curls at back with a little backbrushing to make them fluffier. Brush leafy curls upwards to the crown and then fan out towards face.*

Demure hair fashioning in *Women's Own* book of 70 hairstyles you can set yourself, 2 April 1966, page 16.



Ettie: She's like Cinderella when the birds dressed her do you remember? And that's what hairdressing is and we're transforming a spirit as well because someone will come in down and before you know it, we'll be laughing together, the music, smells, colour, "*Come on, you're getting your hair done, it's a new day*" you know, that was the thing, it's so like, that – it's an art and that's why it should be valued.<sup>86</sup>

### Exoticism and 'dissident hair'

Notions of exoticism and ambivalence concerning otherness, of black, minority ethnic and 'foreign' glamour was raised at intervals in participants' discussions about their hair and fashioning histories. Apart from contributing knowledge about the ubiquity of associations of otherness to women's self-fashioning in Britain, their accounts were also instructive in reflecting the ways in which the cosmetics, hairdressing and fashion industries have historically fore-grounded such allusions whilst erasing, for example, the reality of Black people's relationship to hair grooming above other cosmetic acts.<sup>87</sup> Elizabeth discussed the appeal of 'French' fashioning to her as a young woman:

Because you know anything foreign -[Laughter]- was exotic anyway you know, I mean there was – yes, and somehow I'd managed to absorb an idea that French women were very glamorous, they were very glamorous and also they spent an enormous amount of time on grooming and I had this idea that they prioritised you know, looking beautiful and I think some of that came from reading - I've only just thought of this - but reading small ads in magazines women's magazines at the time. I was fascinated by all the beauty treatments especially like bust enhancers and all this sort of thing, odd bits of machinery and stuff like that and they were all either French or you know, the French Paris style so you did get this idea - and also because the only fashion designers then, I mean apart from Norman Hartnell I think he was the only - Norman Hartnell is the only English fashion designer that I could name from that period and yet Dior – [...] Dior and later Yves St Laurent.

<sup>86</sup> Ettie and Gabrielle pointed me in the direction of the links between fashioning and other satisfying processes of transformation. For example, the (gendered) popularity of the makeover format in TV programming in recent years (Brunsdon et al, 2001, pp. 29-63).

<sup>87</sup> Ryle has pointed out that "*Though they rarely feature in shampoo ads, black people spend more on their hair than any other ethnic group*" (Ryle, 2000, p. 17). Stylist Hector Obeng claims "*Among black women, hair comes top of the list of priorities, above clothes, make-up or jewellery*" (Obeng cited in Lindsay, 2003, p. 4). At the inception of the hairdressing industries in the nineteenth century, "*black hair was considered as closer to beast than man*" (Cox, 1999, p. 26). Consequently, much of the beauty industry's investment has been in repudiating Blackness in a culture where "*as a racial signifier hair is only second to skin*" (Cox, quoted by Pool, 2001, p. 61).

Somewhat ironically, the proliferation of hair products and cosmetics industries from the nineteenth century flourished through presenting ideals of both whiteness and otherness, however unrepresentative. Americaness and Europeaness were similarly recruited into the creation of an alluring difference represented through product branding and in the modelling of specific forms of glamour. In a broader cultural sense, the fields of fashion and the principal cosmetic acts from the turn of the century can be read as signifying an inherent foreignness, alluring to many women in this study, and arguably, troubling to both masculine



As a young woman experimenting with grooming over a decade earlier in the 1940s, Janey remembered the evocative titles of her favoured perfumes: “*The perfumes were Coty, Coty L’Aimant. And ‘Evening in Paris’ was another one*” [Laughter]. British youth’s desire to model European and American forms of fashioning increased in the post-war period consequent with the proliferation of products that emphasised notions of difference.<sup>88</sup> Titles of salons themselves, including ‘La Paris’, established in the 1960s drew directly on the characteristic association of Frenchness with glamour.<sup>89</sup>

In the late 1960s and 1970s the desire for exoticism and difference was reflected in the consumption of products associated with notions of the mythical East and the Orient. By the 1970s Elizabeth’s desire for a glamorous individualism drew upon increasingly accessible and yet still dissident referencing of exotic cosmetics such as kohl, patchouli oil and henna, products alien to salons.<sup>90</sup> Such consumption was a paradoxical anti-fashion fashioning.

Well, I think the hennaing just came from accessibility of henna, you know, I don’t really think I thought about it consciously, but I thought at least I can have a colour, coloured hair you know, and try to make something that would, that I would feel happy with even if it wasn’t fashionable or I don’t know. [...] I mean I didn’t like the hippy thing at all because well, well, I didn’t like it aesthetically but I think everybody or most women were influenced by it to a degree, so although I didn’t like the clothes or anything, I did like the foreignness of it you know, its connection with India and yes, so that was mainly the attraction.

Just in the way that British women’s fashioning of Americanness in the 1950s held risks for, it could be argued, working-class women in particular, so fashioning exoticism in the 1970s appears to have sexualised women choosing to fashion this look based upon the historical assumption of working-

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institutions and normative notions of gender. A pre-war survey produced by the City of London Guild of Hairdressers “*identified that of the master hairdressers in London ninety-seven per cent were foreign born*”(Cox, 1999, p. 71).

<sup>88</sup> The British perception of American’s fashioning to excess is reflected here in Shrimpton’s memory of working in the US. Photographer Irving Penn’s ‘excess’ is compared with Bailey’s Modernist, ‘less is more’ perspective. Penn, objecting to Shrimpton’s greenish grey neck had demanded pancake cover: “*I hated putting on pancake. Bailey never made me use it [...] He repeatedly sent me off to put on more and more pancake. Of course I did what I was told. American Vogue expected much more grooming from their models than was required in Europe*” (Shrimpton, 1991, p. 88).

<sup>89</sup> Ann claimed suitably glamorous roots for the origins of the beauty courses she established in Scotland: “*I would have said so yes, I would have said so, or - yes probably American, perhaps a touch French as well you know, they were into it too, but then Scotland actually leads now in what we have in the way of nationally recognised qualifications*”.

The concurrent development of star systems and a broadening of the fashioning of masculine sexualities on screen led to the growth of related products and fashioning for men. Here, Ettie fuses the excessive femininity of the Melly Wave for men with ‘commonness’ and ‘foreignness’: “*There were certain styles that - and - but I’d say people went in and out of different styles, you would get somebody that you mean, like, would be considered common, common style there were Italian boys, I remember, like Italian boys’ style - there was ‘Melly waves’ they called it, ‘Wee Melly’ I remember wee Garry coming in for a ‘Wee Melly’ he would call it* [Laughter] *which was wee Italian boys’ waves and curls-*”.

<sup>90</sup> The ‘Indian oils’ associated by Jean with her early memories of her middle-class father’s wardrobe, became fused in the early 1970s with Jean’s desire to create an individual fashion: “*It was patchouli oil, Indian oils [...] And I’m still wearing patchouli today because you can still get it, and sandalwood oils*”.



class women's sexual availability and proximity to prostitution.<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth's identification with a 'disreputable' but exotic aunty epitomised the allure despite threatened social disapprobation that attracted women to fashion exoticism to excess:

I don't think she hennaed her hair, but it was always bright red so I think she may have dyed it and yes, Hilary always had very long nails and they were always painted bright red, but my mum had told me about this before I met her and I met her for the first time since being three and a half when I was 15, so I think at that point you know, I was noticing very much what people were, women were wearing and I just thought she was extremely glamorous and terribly daring yes, and I did want to be such a person myself.<sup>92</sup>

Many participants contributed information that constituted collective histories of knowledge of the meanings of fashionings where ethnicity, racism, glamour and difference were fused in an often iconic image of feminine excess. Prior to conducting this research I had never come across the term 'Barras Tart'.<sup>93</sup> Ellen explained:

I mean it is a generic term if you like. [...] Yep, aye, lots of people would know, maybe aspiring Glaswegians that maybe didn't want to be associated with that sort of thing, but when I worked there, and I obviously had this - not that I ever took on board what my mother said, was a realisation that she has flaws and stuff as well, but these women were incredible in the sense that they seemed to run the show and they certainly were strong women, but that wasn't alien to me because my Mum was quite a strong woman and kind of organised – but they seemed to always have - we were quite a small family and didn't have a lot of extended family, but they all

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<sup>91</sup> This attitude is illustrated in a memory work text: "When A was walking from one grammar school site to another, a boy who had a head of natural red curls and had starred in the BBC programme *The Secret Garden* said to his group of posh friends, 'Only tarts have dyed hair'. This was levelled at A and her hennaed hair. She thought that there was something in his enunciation that meant that he would be at home at university and that this mode of delivery and accent made him 'naturally' intelligent. She felt a force that made her think of his parents, what he had learnt from them and what she would never know. It was a moment when he changed from being someone who would have had to work hard to match her efforts to someone she felt she felt overtaken by".

<sup>92</sup> McRobbie has noted that working a salon frequented by wealthy Jewish customers in Glasgow in the mid-1960s provided her with exciting models of feminine excess, notwithstanding the anti-Semitism prevalent amongst the salon staff more: "In the hairdressing salon I was attracted by the foreignness of the clients. They actually came from somewhere else. I liked their European names; it was like being in a different country." (McRobbie, 1986, pp16-17)

<sup>93</sup> Having visited Glasgow's Barras market regularly for over twenty years, and even running a stall there on one occasion. Shortly before our interview and in a moment of illumination for me, Ellen linked this term to Roma people. In the following extract I attempted to learn more about its particular meaning for her. Her comments suggested discomfort with the term but an acknowledgement of an enduring fashioning difference:

AP: You gave me a phrase that I've been thinking about a lot and I've been thinking, this is really does name a certain style, do you want to tell us?

Ellen: It was Barras Tart aha. [Laughter] [...] I went to the Barras on Sunday and I hadn't been there for years and years and years and when I was at school I used to help out on a stall at the Barras [...] So I was quite heavily into it then but, I kept seeing all these women like I'm talking about, when I was at school, which would be late sixties early seventies and they were still there Adele, they were still there.

AP: Did they recognise you?

Ellen: No, I don't mean they were the same women, but the same type of women, the same type of women.

AP: And in your own words I'd like you to tell me what the characteristics are of this certain style [...].

Ellen: Well, that's a kind of difficult one because the reason I say Barras Tarts is because my mother - that's obviously come from her and she would have said that, my father would never have said that ever, ever. [...] didn't want anything to do with hawkers or - because my father was, I think his granny was a hawker. [Laughter]



seemed to have a huge extended family [...] different they, they, they ones, you mind the ones with the earrings, the black eyes and the with just that look about them, hawkers, hawkers they were called, Barras Tarts my Mum used to say.

Ellen defined the hair and fashioning of women associated with the Barras market as distinctive, excessive but respectable. Their hair was:

Always back, tied back in a bun and there'd be, depending on their age, but even if they were elderly it would be backcombed and tied back in a bun, you never, never saw these women with their hair down, that's maybe to do with - only your husband saw you with your hair down or whatever, you would get untidy ones but, but not [...] - and wore a lot of black as well, you never saw them in bright colours, maybe a bright coloured blouse and the funny thing, when I think back now, no patterns never a pattern, always a self coloured - [...] they all seemed to have dark hair as well and Scottish people don't really have dark hair, you'll get dark, darkish like Irish, but it's a different type of dark, its not, it is a different type of dark.<sup>94</sup>

Ellen's history of working at the Barras and having a great-grandparent who was market trader enabled her to be frank about 'Barras Tarts' whilst distancing herself like her mother before her from this pejorative identification.<sup>95</sup> She was interpellated by the arresting iconic look of strangers who fashioned in ways that resisted or were beyond fashion, remembered for their power, glamour and *respectability* and yet were named in a derogatory way. They were 'tarts' because of their class, ethnicity and gender - read off from their fashioning.<sup>96</sup> Whilst Ettie, with her personal awareness of racist discrimination, embraced diversity, Ellen hinted at the anxiety caused by the *proximity* of identifications, arguably inherited from her aspirant middle-class mother who preferred to distance herself from her husband's own 'hawker' heritage. Having knowledge of anti-Irish racism, exploitation

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<sup>94</sup> In a feminist insight, Ellen linked the legendary Maggie McIver, the founder of the Barras to travelling communities in Scotland: "Maggie McIver was one of the matriarchs, now, McIver is a Stornoway name and up in Stornoway there's a huge, huge load of gypsies. One year the gypsy king died, my friend Maureen is from Stornoway and she is a McIver spelt differently..." I hope to develop this link in future research. The notion of 'ethnic hair' - the dissident black hair of 'hawkers' arose in Ettie's memory of her Mum's racist admonishment when Ettie dyed her hair black - Her Mum had ignored her in the street, saying: "I was ashamed to say hello. You look like a Pakistani". Ettie added: "I was getting on the bus once, I would never check my fare, I'd give it the black man and mother would say, 'Yeah because he thinks you are one of them.' I would have pan stick on, you know, the tan - big eyeliners -"

<sup>95</sup> Although Ettie recognised the specificities of fashioning inherent with this term, she absolutely objected to the term when I raised it in our meeting.

AP: Anyway I was talking to this - and she said, "Oh you mean 'Barras Tart', a 'Barras Tart'."

Ettie: - Aha, 'Barras tarts.' oh there's a lot of names -

AP: - And she said, she didn't mean it a horrible way -

Ettie: I knew all the expressions, I knew all the expressions on the malicious side, that's the thing about hairdressing too, there's a big wide - all the classes coming in, all the professions, all the world. I hate people referring to it it's a bit like 'Barras tarts', it's too like 'cabbage' referring to a woman who stays at home as a cabbage [...] It's not nice, it's a derogatory thing; they are awful good at that in Glasgow, putting a tag on you -

<sup>96</sup> Ellen described 'Barras Tarts' fashioning in a form I have described as 'fashion inertia'.



and working –class discrimination in Glasgow, Ettie's migration to New York in the 1960s was liberatory departure:

I had big ideas about who I was and what I was, even though I came from what would be considered immigrants from Ireland, because the Irish were underneath, it was no blacks, no dogs, no Irish even after my grandmother, so she had a great sense of, you were up there, you know, maybe that made her twice as - I went in and got the interview [with the manager of a prestigious salon in New York], he was perfect, he said, *"I've waited all my life for an accent like that. I'd love to interview you. Love your accent"*. So, I went in and got the interview and I was working with Italian, Puerto Ricans, Brooklyn's, Hungarians, a girl that did Zsa Zsa Gabor and Miss Universe kept coming in, it was so interesting, I loved it, it was like being on the set of a movie, I was on my way to Miami where the Miss Universe Pageant was, in the hotel that they stayed in and they got glamorised before they were going out, and the cameras, I would have loved to have kept a log of photographs-

Although the field of Black hairstyling has been considered the ultimate 'triumph of artifice'<sup>97</sup> Black hairdressing and the fashioning of Black forms of glamour has remained absolutely marginalised. Racism in the field prevailed in both British and American contexts in the period recorded by participants and in fashioning cultures more generally.<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth had noted how her Jamaican neighbours would invest heavily in attempts to adopt White hairstylings and that this identification was capitalised upon by cosmetic industries:

In the 1960s we had a Jamaican family come to live next door to us and now what was interesting for me was that you know our friends Cherie and her friends and teenage daughters they were extremely keen to have Western-style hairdos, bouffant hairdos so they used to spend a lot of time at the hairdressers you know trying to get their hair smooth and I remember reading their newspapers and magazines which were full of hair straightening potions and treatments and products and that sort of thing.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ryle has claimed, *"Black hair is oval in cross section, unlike Asian and Caucasian hair, which is circular. This apparently is what gives it its curl... the inventiveness of black hairstyles is born from this recalcitrant quality in the raw material. They are in this sense, a triumph of artifice"* (Ryle, 2000, p. 17).

<sup>98</sup> Some participants' used racist terms at points in the research process. Jenny, for example, used the following expression: *"I feel worse coming in than when I go out [indecipherable], I feel like a golliwog. I'm a different woman when I go out"*.

<sup>99</sup> Although its claims to naturalness might now be questioned, from the 1960s the Afro represented broader political messages emerging first through Black Civil Rights' spokespersons and writers such as Marcus Garvey, Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X. They linked Black consciousness and pride to a rejection of processes literally that mimicked whiteness (Cox, 1999, p. 205-6; Mercer, 1994). As I have indicated in the Literature Review, Mercer and others have contested the notion of the 'natural' Afro. Ronke Jolaoso of *Black Beauty and Hair* magazine confirms this on a pragmatic level: *"Black hair is labour intensive; there is no way round it. I wore my hair natural for a while but I ended up being ruled by it. Every night I had to plait it and put it under*



25. Salon interiors and fashioning environments: 'Cutz'.



Fashioning extensions.



Process of transformation.



Rudimentary fashioning apparatus and furnishings in Cutz.



If the political meaning, if not the origins of the Afro has been transparent, the adoption of this style by white, British working classes by the 1970s has not been adequately accounted for. The unpredictability of such identifications, given the prevalence of racism is apparent in Pam's account of her white mother's adoption of the look in the mid 1970s, one she stayed loyal to until the late 1990s:

AP: So are there any other memories that you have got of any hairdressing experiences or any particular hairdos that you felt strongly about or remembered being significant?

Pam: Afro hair.

Adele: Afro hair?

Pam: I remember that.

Adele: Wow, did you get an Afro hairdo?

Pam: No, I didn't. [Laughter]

Adele: Oh right. What impact did that have on you seeing those for the first time?

Pam: I don't know, I was just - like it just didn't seem natural, you know what I mean? [...] I can remember me mum had one and every time I think of it I kill myself. [Laughter]

Adele: So when was that? When did she get an Afro?

Pam: I must have been about thirteen something when she got that done and stopped about two years ago or something.

Adele: [...] So why do you think she had an Afro perm?

Kathy: It was probably the in thing at the time.

Pam: Aye, I think it was the in thing at the time and it just bubbled, and she had really black hair and really pale skin [Laughter] it was just - when she came in the door and we had to look and look again, we said, "*What have you done?*" [Laughing]

Adele: [...] so your mum - was she quite courageous and experimental with -?

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a scarf and then go through having to style it all again in the morning. Wearing it straightened is a lot easier" (Jolaoso quoted in Lindsay, 2003, p. 4).



Pam: No, not really. Funny enough, no with make-up or anything like that you know.

Adele: She must have just really wanted that Afro. [Laughter]<sup>100</sup>

Black writers across genres have discussed the importance of hair cultures for African American, Afro-Caribbean and Black British culture.<sup>101</sup> Rooks has explored the notion of 'fugitive fashion' in this context, that is, a form of vernacular fashioning where "*whiteness gets troubled*" (Rooks, 1997).<sup>102</sup>

In recent years braided hair extensions have become extremely popular in British urban centres including Glasgow. This unequivocally Black hair fashioning is a dissident style worn by white, primarily young working-class women. This style is not one promoted in fashion magazines or by music or film star associations. Braided hair fashionings are frequently undertaken in homes and outlaw salons.<sup>103</sup> Whilst performing the function for Maureen and Elizabeth in terms of offering the abundance and excessive femininity they desired, such fashionings defy any reductive meanings based on the politics of identity or consumption.

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<sup>100</sup> More recently the Afro has undergone a process of queering, post-modern and camp appropriation providing a further 'ironic' accessory for Black and white stars alike. In her article 'Big Up' that charts the renaissance of the Afro, Zoe Richardson bracketed Beyonce Knowles spoof Afro donned by her in *Goldmember*, the stylist-approved chic Afro wig of Naomi Campbell and an endorsement of the birth of the Jew-fro as modelled by Justin Timberlake (Richardson, 2002).

<sup>101</sup> For example, Zadie Smith had her protagonist undergo a Malcolm X-type hair-straightening trauma in her novel *White Teeth*. Smith pathologises the process and emphasises the difference between white and Black salons and hairdressers: "*Jackie and Denise [hairdressers at P.K's Afro Hair: Design and Management] having none of the obligations of white hairdressers, no need to make tea or kiss arse, flatter or make conversation (for those were not customers they were dealing with but desperate wretched patients), would give a sceptical snort and whip off the puke-green gown. 'It's as straight as it ever going to be!'*" (Smith, 2001, p. 275).

<sup>102</sup> Rooks' work, first cited in 'Fashioning Dusty' has offered a useful model for this research in her conceptualisation of fashioning dissidence, specifically, dissident hair. Rooks has discussed how young African American school girls' fashioning dissident corn-rowed hair have had the capacity to trouble school staff to the extent that they were sent home (Rooks, 1997). Rooks claims that in Afro-American culture the will to adorn takes place in a context where Black bodies are embattled and where adornment is a 'communal style'. Corn-rows had been interpreted as a violation of school dress codes they had been viewed as disrupting the school context. As Rooks states "*the acceptable hair identity was different*" (ibid.). Whereas the white school administrators claimed never to have witnessed corn rowed hair, braiding in Afro-American culture, Rooks claims, is a 'utopian moment', a closeness, 'it is when you are loved'. In two further cases, two other girls were sent home as there was a correlation made between their hair and gang activity. Rooks has concluded that black hairstyles have meaning, "*they frighten white people*" but that people have rights to self adornment. Francine, a hairdresser at 'Cutz' had grown up in Botswana where her teacher had been a white missionary. She remembered: "*She sent me home for having corn-rowed hair but it was the oldest hairstyle. My mum had corn-rows, my grandma and everyone*". Asked why she thought she had been sent home she said that she thought they were thought of as 'pagan'. My own memory work included an episode where A was called into the grammar school's headmaster's office on returning to school after the summer holidays to be told off about having hennaed hair, an occasion remembered in terms of issues of class conflict, in/justice, glamour, identification and dissidence.

<sup>103</sup> Only two salons in Glasgow specialise in Afro hairstylings. 'Cutz' doubles up as a meeting place and social centre for many Black people. During my visit people came in for tea, chatted and left without any hairdressing business being undertaken. Francine, a hairdresser, was an architecture student who worked at the salon for nothing other than the social contact. White, Black and minority women were having their hair braided or styled at 'Cutz' during my visit. The scale of hair braiding visible on the streets of Glasgow at the time of writing suggests that the majority of this is being undertaken in people's homes or makeshift salons and is advertised through word of mouth. In 2002, two young Black women were shot at a party in a similar salon in Aston, Birmingham. In an article following this event Emma Lindsay stated that: "*unlike their white counterparts, black salons are a focal point for the community – Walk past a black hair salon on a Friday or Saturday night and you'll see it jammed with customers until midnight*" (Lindsay, 2003: p. 4).



# YOU AT SIXTEEN



Now here is the first entry for your own personal Journal! Copy the quiz on this page into the first right-hand page of your Journal. Paste a photograph of yourself at the top of that page. This will be an interesting entry to look back on in the future, when you will probably have completed your Journal, and changed quite a bit yourself.

In any case, don't fill in the questionnaire printed on this page of SIXTEEN. Other people may be using this copy after you—and they will not be very thrilled to read all about you!

1. Your name CAROLYN PATERSON  
 Your birth date 1953  
 Height 5' 3"  
 Weight 115  
 Hair colour MED. BROWN  
 Eye colour GREEN  
 Complexion (Fair/Medium/Dark) Fair

2. Do you regard yourself as  
 Serious .....  
 Light-hearted .....  
 Romantic .....  
 Aloof.....

3. Are you easily upset by  
 Criticism .....  
 Teasing .....  
 Quarrels ☒

4. How many close friends have you had so far in your life?.....

5. What do you regard as the two most essential qualities in a friend?  
 Affection .....  
 Unselfishness ☒  
 Humour .....  
 Sociability .....

- Good grooming ☒  
 Intelligence .....  
 Dependability .....  
 Good dress sense .....

6. On which of the following would you think it most worthwhile to spend £1?  
 A new hairstyle.....☒  
 A record.....☒  
 A coffee-bar meal for two .....  
 Two seats for a new film.....  
 Jewellery .....  
 Paperback books .....

7. Have you ever been alone for a whole day? Does the prospect appal you or intrigue you?.....

8. How many of the following would thrill you?  
 Climbing a mountain.....  
 Writing a poem.....☒  
 Becoming a pop singer.....  
 Making a dress.....☒

9. Are any of these your ambitions?  
 Becoming a ballet dancer.....

- Having a flat of your own.....  
 Travelling abroad.....☒  
 Living in the country.....☒  
 Having at least two children .....  
 Making a lot of money.....☒

10. What do you think is the most important thing that has happened to you so far? HAPPYNESS

11. If you could change yourself in one way only, which would you choose to be?  
 Prettier ☒  
 Cleverer.....☒  
 More confident.....☒  
 Taller.....☒  
 Shorter .....

12. Which of the following do you think the most important in a husband?  
 Success in his job.....☒  
 Kindness.....☒  
 Good looks.....  
 Helpfulness in the house.....☒  
 Thrift .....  
 Devotion to you.....☒



## 5.5 Political discourses of hair

### Complex knowledges, discourses of hair

The insights of Mercer and Rooks, that hair has meaning beyond good/bad, are borne out in the accounts of research participants<sup>104</sup>. Michelle articulated in a self-deprecating way details, terms and descriptions for processes that were meaningful to her and her peer group and, on the basis of similarly rich accounts by older women participants, these could be seen as merely a contemporary contribution to an historical discourse:

AP: What do you do when you're in front of the mirror? Are you just combing your hair or -?

Michelle: Well, if I'm putting it up I'll have – I have got every hair product that's on the market so even if I'm going for the natural, just-got-out-of-bed look it's been manufactured to look like that. [Laughter] It'll take about half an hour. I'll have all my products and I know what ones I'm using, whether my hair's going to be curly or straight or up or down. [Laughter] It's a pure waste of time. It takes me ages doing it and then if I'm doing it straight - if I'm - well that's if it's a during-the-day hairdo, if it's a night hairdo it'll take me forever because I'll then have to use different products on my hair when it's wet and then when it's dry. I'll use different products and then I'll have to blow dry it and then have to take straightening irons over it to till it goes straight, so it takes me ages to do my hair if I'm going out and I hate doing it. [...] I hate the process of sitting blow-drying it but once it's done I love it, I love my hair to look - and if I've got the mirrors that I can see right round. [Laughter].<sup>105</sup>

At one point I confused streaks with highlights, a subtle distinction that even Michelle found difficult to articulate:

Michelle: It's not streaks, you've got to know, its highlights, there's a big distinction between streaks and highlights.

AP: And what was the distinction?

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<sup>104</sup> Jackie, a white customer at 'Cutz' said that Black hairstyles had looked to her like expressions of pride and that is why she had wanted one, and it was practical since she went surfing.

<sup>105</sup> I asked Michelle, What sort of effort did you go to? Can you remember the sorts of things you did to create this construction of yourself at that particular time?:

Michelle: Well, I made sure I didn't wear like those purpley, tassely skirt things, I had you know, like, kind of bright coloured bandanas and things in my hair, coloured beads [Laughter] but not grungy, not that dull, dirty, purple and black look it wasn't that at all.

On several occasions my lack of finesse or knowledge in naming specific stylings was given a more refined, specific definition.

Michelle: No it wasn't grungy though, it wasn't grunge, it was flower power clean with the emphasis on clean, it was like sixties hippy not a grungy hippy.

AP: Right, ok. So you were-

Michelle: I went to a lot of effort to make sure I looked like a kind of sixties hippy and not this grungy hippy



Michelle: I don't know, it's just that highlights were highlights. Streaks were naff, streaks were like guys with short hair and white streaks and highlights were not naff.

The specificity of looks was both co-authored and appreciated by her friends and her sister.

Michelle: I mean, I liked it once it was done and I was probably the most particular about how it was done. I would take forever. I would be like that, *"No, no, it's not right, touch this, change that"*.<sup>106</sup>

She discussed the complexity of managing and justifying her will to adorn whilst sustaining her feminist beliefs. This had intensified when she was performing as part of a band.<sup>107</sup>

The spectrum of skills, and technical knowledge in fashioning required of hairdressers was emphasised by Ettie:

When I trained in the sixties it was two years improving, three years training, two years improving on what you had – a bit like [...] a learner driver, after your three years that was you

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<sup>106</sup> Requesting more information on Michelle's conception of individual and collective notions of 'rightness' I asked

AP: [...] what were you looking for, for it to be right, what sorts of things? How did you know when it was right?

Michelle: My eyes would have to be exactly, like, equal, my lips would have to be perfect, like symmetrical I suppose.

AP: Right so symmetry and other things that meant the difference between it being right and not quite right?

Michelle: If the colour didn't look right, because my colour would have to match my outfit, which would have to match my shoes, would have to match my hair, everything.

AP [...] but do you think generally women who were gathering were looking for similar sort of effects or did they all have their own style that they were looking for?

Michelle: Similar but their own style

She detailed the mass of processes to be organised each weekend:

Michelle: Legs, your arms, [both shaved] your eyebrows have to be plucked and then you hit the shower and then doing your hair, oh, at the same time going through all the outfits that you think you might be wearing as well [Laughter] doing your hair before you can do your makeup, you have to decide on your outfit in case your wearing like a kind of brown outfit then you can't wear grey make-up kind of thing, so you have to know what you're wearing so you can do your make-up, then getting your outfit, getting your make-up, getting your shoes and a jacket and bag that you're taking with you and getting everything to match, trying on twenty different outfits.

AP: - so when Sheila is ready to go she comes to your, your mug [Laughter] what procedure does she go through? Is it the same procedure each time? What does she do?

Michelle: Yes, I'll do all my face make-up and then she, she just does my eye shadow so I'm all ready.

AP: So what do you call your face make-up then?

Michelle: Like my foundation and your powder and blusher and I've done my eyebrows, lipstick, everything except my mascara and everything except my eye shadow.

Michelle's attention to detail in fashioning extended to her domestic space where she had once constructed a hippy interior with *"all the incense sticks and all the stupid candles and bells"*. And later, when gravitating into her 'clubby' and 'trendy' looks respectively -

Michelle: It was black. [Indecipherable] [Laughter] [...]

AP: Tell me what your room's like.

Michelle: Minimalist.

AP: Minimalist, right.

Michelle: Not a lot of stuff in it, very, very neat and tidy and quite trendy.

<sup>107</sup> *"Well, I was conscious of the fact that loads of disgusting guys come pure off on the idea of some, like, young lassie playing the saxophone, so you always had to wear clothes that were not revealing or short or low cut. I always wore trousers and I always wore - I kind of dressed down, I dressed up but I dressed down, if you know what I mean."*

Ann had also felt compelled to develop a knowledge of how to 'dress up and dress down' – a form of negotiating femininity

Ann: That's something that did used to really, really piss me off and I can remember the first business meeting - I was going into my new business with my business advisor who said, *"Oh you're a really good looking woman, that'll open doors for you"* and I mean it took me all my strength to not walk out of the meeting there and then. There is a general attitude – [...] but I would



qualified, but you were improving for two years and it was all across the board hairdressing, it wasn't just like they have got colour technicians now, perming technicians, fancy titles, we were everything, you had to get skilled from the baby right through to the grandmother, you had to be skilled in perming, tinting, cutting, everything, all aspects-

She consistently conceptualised hairdressing as a creative rather than cosmetic act: *"Ohhh, after the torture chambers it erupts into art. It was a design then, you were doing 'up' styles that took you - it was a craft, you were threading in pearls and velvet and, you know, hair coming down, false pieces, that's right and girls with long hair..."* She acknowledged the complexity of a job where technical, artistic and interpersonal skills at very high levels were required:

Some people are just lousy hairdressers, they canny do it, it's got to be in you, it's not - I think it's in your genes, artistic, and it shouldn't be undervalued [...] It should be treasured as any other, you know, it's a hands on thing. I had came from Garnethill Convent into the counting house and then into this job, our first clients queued up when we opened and they were prostitutes from the Polaris, Tattooed Lucy and very, I mean, terrific natured girls [...] but that was a whole training, you'd have them in the morning, you would have STV stars coming from the studios, singers, I remember, I never was interested, they were rotten, well they weren't rotten, I shouldn't say that Babs... The Beverley Sisters, and groups like that ...

Maureen and Mrs Lohead discussed their experiences of specific discourses between customer and hairdresser, what Michelle referred to as knowledge required in order to achieve a satisfactory hairstyle.

Maureen: I got a perm, I got two perms, I got one, I got one, I got a perm and then got - it was like a spiral thing, but the spiral never took because my hair was too thick and I didn't want it cut, I just wanted it just all pure curly so it never took, so it wasnae anybody's fault and then I came back here and I got my perms fae here, so they do my perms for me sometimes I get, it's two they think so it's a twig, it's a twig plant they do and they think it's the twirls that are actually doing - so it's all curly, curly, curly, it's lovely once its all done.

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Mrs Lohead: Well today I'll just have the shampoo and set, I had a perm just about four weeks ago and in between, I have a perm every four months and in between I have my hair trimmed. She always gives you a good trim before the perm and that only lasts about six weeks, two months and so I have another trim. But every week I come I get shampoo and set. Some people

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probably tend to dress down not the way I would want to go to a serious business meeting now, because I want not to have any - too much of a pre-judgement against me.



get a blow dry, but I've always stuck to the same, puts the rollers in and I always get a setting lotion.

Sandy drew my attention to the fact that in the hairdressing industry the term 'fashioned' itself was used as a synonym for complexity: "*Yeah, and 'fashioned', you know, to mean a sort of, every bit of it, you know, it's been done into a particular style, you know, it's not been left to be free and everything but a really fashioned hairdo, you know*".

### Fashioning feminist hair

By the 1970s specific styles of short hair on women were associated with feminism and modernism.<sup>108</sup> Karen Durbin's *Spare Rib* cover story rehearsed a narrative of transformation, a 'before and after' makeover. Before, Durbin was an archetype of the white, young, bourgeois 'hairy generation'. She confirmed what Elizabeth had intuited about bourgeois girls with abundant hair, they were muses for artists,<sup>109</sup> and "*it was as if we were announcing our sexuality*". Maintaining her natural look required significant labour, her waist-length hair took "*an hour to wash and brush and a half-day to dry*". Both style and signification led her to doubt whether this hair was appropriate for a feminist:

I was active in the women's movement and it always struck me as funny to go to a meeting and see all us activist women, in our jeans and tee-shirts and sturdy boots, talking about the hassles of being sex objects, and yet with no more than one or two exceptions at every gathering we all had outrageous heads of hair. Impractical, inconvenient, downright counter-revolutionary. [...] To be fair I don't think it was simply vanity. We were making a statement with all that hair. That we weren't nice girls any more. That we were wild and woolly and out of control. [After, the crop] It now looks properly boyish. It feels sexless to have so little hair. And defiant. As if I am thumbing my nose at the whole idea of trying to be sexy. [...] Oh, but it does feel good. Parting with vanity. [...] Short hair is easier to live with and it feels as natural as blue jeans and comfortable shoes. [...] <sup>110</sup>(Durbin, SR no18)

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<sup>108</sup> In his article 'The Boyish Look', Zdatny provides an illuminating analysis of the meanings of short hair for women when this look first achieved popularity in the 1920s: "*While women's hair became shorter [at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century] it did not become simpler or cheaper. Quite the contrary: cheveux courts required constant attention and frequent trips to the beauty parlour. Women consequently began to spend more and more money on their hair*" (Zdatny, 1997, p. 376). Feminist magazines implicitly promoted this look, paradoxically suggesting that looks did and did not matter.

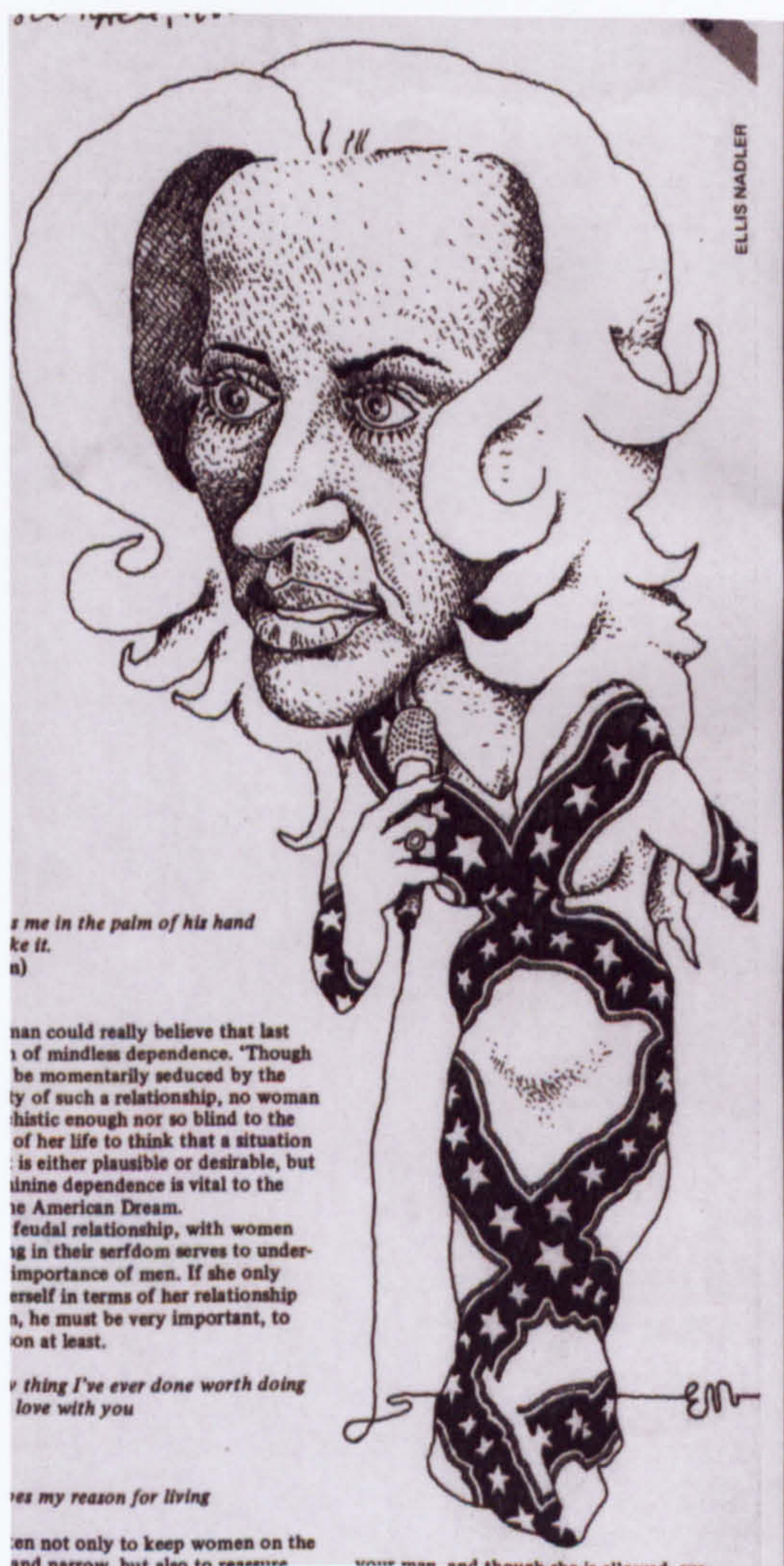
<sup>109</sup> The cover declared hair as "*as a political and sexual symbol*" Durbin modelled the feminist haircut, a crop. In her 'hairy' former life, Durbin's mane had been 'discovered' by a male photographer friend after which she posed for him.

<sup>110</sup> Anxious to clarify her own sexual identity with the so-called sexlessness of the crop, Durbin noted: "*Since I am human (and heterosexual) as well as feminist, I can't pretend it's not important to me to know that I can attract men who attract me. I couldn't help wondering if I would be sexless without my plumage. [But all is well after meeting a man at a party] He says I look like a pineapple when I wake up in the morning with my three inches of hair standing up in spikes. But it's okay. Turns out he likes pineapple*" (Durbin, *Spare Rib*, no.18).





27. Cartoon, Wynnie Raine, *Spare Rib*, issue 14, August, 1973, page 25.



Caricature of Tammy Wynette in 'Peroxide politics and the counter-revolution', Sue Tyrell, *Spare Rib*, issue 42, 1975, page 45.



Durbin's candid confessional, typical of *Rib*'s editorial tone, is in contrast to the caricatures of dumb fashioning to excess used in *Rib*. In such representations, ostensibly objecting to the patriarchal control of women, *Rib* demonstrated an ambivalence itself concerning the sexualising of women who fashion femininity to excess. The blonde archetype of femininity features as comic device, and the scathing review of Tammy Wynette in 1975 discussed earlier demonstrates *Rib*'s conflation of fashioning femininity with right wing politics again illustrated with a cartoon caricature. The rhetorical invocation of the evils of feminine excess and feminised, popular culture demonstrated the unconscious proximity of feminist positions to those of conservative patriarchy on these issues at a critical moment in second-wave British feminist politics.

Feminist literature has subsequently offered little in the way of discussion about those women who resisted the feminist fashion imperative to have short, unfashioned hair, or comfortable shoes, or blue jeans outside more recent debates on so-called lipstick lesbianism and femme. Durbin's assumption endorsed by the *SR* collectives editorial stance that the purpose and/or consequence of fashioning femininity was to attract men has rarely been challenged, and what of those women who took pleasure in the processes of fashioning their hair? The inference remained ambiguous.<sup>111</sup> Given the proscriptiveness of much feminist rhetoric about fashioning to excess and the media's demonisation and caricaturing of feminists, the research participants' general obliviousness or lack of interest in either what feminists look/ed like or in fact what feminists might think or have thought about fashioning gave this project something of an unexpectedly ironic dimension:

AP: But when I say the word feminist does an image pop into your head?

Jane: Aye, well somebody thin, young.

AP: And do you think there can be a feminist hairdo? [4 second silence] [...]

Pam: Some people try to get their make-up to look natural, that's why I apply my own make-up because to try and make myself to look natural.

Ellen, now in her forties, had both encountered and rejected stereotyped notions of feminists:

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<sup>111</sup> Durbin, growing up in the US in the 1950s noted: "*The Bad Boys and the Bad Girls had more hair [...] The difference between our styles [i.e. the hair of the middle-classes] was one of sex. Bad Boys and Bad Girls were frankly sexy, with their greasy curls and frowsy flopping waves. We knew about them: they Did It at drive in movies, in parked cars. They were going to go blind some day, and they weren't going to be the future leaders of their country*" (Durbin, 1973).



I think I probably was aware of it at college and I think it was something I wasn't involved in [Laughter] I had too many other things going on and it just wasn't something I was going to be engaged with, but part of that really was to do with the fact that I usually got what I wanted anyway and I usually got it in a completely non-feminist way [Laughter] and I don't know whether that had to do with just being an only daughter or you know, at that time having the nice blonde hair and the gear and everything, so I just went ahead and got on with it and never really thought, but then I would never have let anybody treat me badly or mistreat me in any way because I just, you know – [...] I think all that burning your bra stuff, I certainly got the tail end of that, but to me that was, like, that was just like fun you know, I didn't actually understand the symbolism behind it at all, just, I don't think I was sophisticated enough, I don't think a lot of young women were sophisticated enough to understand and I think maybe if your life was running along a different line,

AP: But do you remember feeling like, aware of feminist fashioning? Did you associate a certain look with feminists?

Ellen: No, no, I don't think so. I don't, I don't, I think later on, when you've got that very kind of bad press where, oh yeah, it's all women with moustaches and they have obviously got some sort of gripe but certainly not at twenty, I mean, I didn't even know what a blooming lesbian was at twenty. [Laughter]

Ettie's critiques of feminism were perceived as set against both her socialism and her Catholicism:

That's what annoys me about women nowadays, this feminist kind of equality thing, at the end of the day what are they paying their minders? What are they paying their hairdressers? Where is the equality and these women wouldn't even clean their own toilet and I think, crisis to them is breaking a nail, all the glamour is on the outside when the inside stinks. [...] It's terrible when you say feminist to me, or I hear the word feminist, not just when you say it to me, I always think it's a very aggressive women that's got a chip on her shoulder, that's not had a good relationship with her father, that's why fathers are so important or men, who's probably been delivered the wrong recipe, anyway I feel a bit sorry for them and a bit angry at what's been done through feminism. I always thought feminists wear boots and I love boots, I've got a big pair of boots in the house.

However, for the self-identified feminist participants their past or current will to adorn, their pleasures in transformation and fashioning to excess were understood as in conflict with feminism.

This ambivalence featured throughout Michelle's account: "*Once I've done it, done my hair and done*



*my make-up and I think it looks nice, and I think it looks nice and I'm glad I've done it, but I still think it's a waste of time, aye".* <sup>112</sup> She was the only participant who denied ever having identified with a style, fashion or star as a young person:

I didn't recall having any kind of awareness of what other people were dressing like or looking like other than my sister just to torment her, so - but we didn't like read the magazines or spend it with hair or make-up, we wasn't allowed to use it – not that I wasn't allowed, I wasn't interested in it and I don't really remember - I didn't feel left out because of it. I don't think it was anything - I don't think it was anything that any of us were really interested in. <sup>113</sup>

However, Michelle identified at least to a significant degree with feminists. Her account provided a useful model of the conceptualisation of feminist style as a fashion antithesis, the perception of *not* doing something. Her memory of feminists fashioning is of a barely registered uniformity, the ubiquity of denim and sensible shoes, as in Durbin's account above:<sup>114</sup>

AP: Do you think or did you think there was a sort of feminist hairdo?

Michelle: No. Well I didn't really think there was a feminist hairdo, but I'd thought there was a feminist-hair-not-to-do, which involved hairspray, and flouncy [gestures 'big hair'] I suppose.

AP: Right, ok, I mean you've just sort of gestured something like, I don't know what -

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<sup>112</sup> Michelle articulated how her feminist and socialist consciousness intervened at a point when she attempted to justify her pleasures in fashioning:

Michelle: I mean, I don't think anybody really escapes fashion, even people who think they are opting out because they have got a specific look as well [...] And the thing is why should you? You know, why shouldn't you take pleasure in preening and wearing nice clothes, I mean, obviously the money aspect comes into it and that's when I think, Oh wait a wee minute, you know, it is about money, you need money to look good.

<sup>113</sup> This somewhat unconvincing notion of a dissociation from fashioning echoes comments by Claire when she implied that fashion happened to other girls. In her memories of her mother's perpetual shaggy perm, Michelle suggested that her mother had avoided the pitfalls of a fashion dependency.

<sup>114</sup> Michelle: - I don't know where I first heard of it [feminism] but I know all my family were politically active. My mum was a feminist, her friends are feminists so I must have been, it must have been spoken of, but I don't know when - but I know in secondary school I used to call myself a feminist and I was always talking feminist politics, however simplistic it was then, but I was politically active at a young, young, young age and as early as that I was a feminist.

AP: And did you have any conception of feminist views on fashioning? [...]

Michelle: Well, when I first started the make-up thing and I thought, mmm, this isn't feminist to be wearing make-up.

AP: Where did you pick that up?

Michelle: Probably just a stereotypes that are out there about what a feminist is or a feminist/lesbian/ untrendy - or a particular look which wasn't make-up. So then, when I got into the hippy dippy stuff I'd never like shave my legs or anything like that and when I was in to the hippy thing I used to make a big deal of the fact that I, I sort of, was thinking about - never shaved my legs and I didn't shave my arms and I didn't wear make-up.

AP: So did you feel like more able to square with this feminist thing when you were fashioning yourself in a certain way? [...]

Michelle: It kind of validated my politics, the way I was looking [...] And I made a big deal about the way I was looking.

AP: Right, even though you are saying that you were probably spending as much time -?

Michelle: I wasn't, well, aye I was actually, for my clothes not so much for my hair but the clothes aye, I was.

AP: Do you remember - if you are saying your mum and her pals were all feminist did you identify feminism with the way that they looked?

Michelle: I don't know because everybody looked like that, like, I remember things like going to like Faslane [Peace camp] and stuff and all the demonstrations we used to go on but everybody looked the same it was all like jeans and flat shoes and denim jackets, everybody just looked the same so -



Michelle: Farrah Fawcett flick. [Laughter]<sup>115</sup>

Michelle, active in women's organisations had perceived negative comments and criticism from feminists about her fashioning.<sup>116</sup> I asked

AP: [...] Did you at the time feel that they had somehow escaped this, sort of, not an industry, socialisation of fashion?

Michelle: No I didn't because they had made a lot of them make a conscious effort not to be seen to be part of the fashion industry, but at the same time displaying a distinct fashion look.

Sandy recounted consciously thinking she should change her appearance, a stylisation that was based on 'less' and masculinisation, when she first began to mix with feminists:

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<sup>115</sup> Responding to the question of whether there was still a feminist view on fashioning Michelle returned to the conflicted argument mode where she saw feminist theory on fashioning as a grand political narrative and her own decision to fashion as a personal/political battleground:

Michelle: Well, I don't I think there is. I think some, maybe on a personal level, for some feminists, well not on a personal level, on a political level, some feminists don't think – see, I mean, I have a bit of a problem with this because I do think we are buying into this whole fashion culture and it is, you know, contriving an image of women that is not in the image of women it's a contrived - you're spending money on it, you're going through, you know, like links to anorexia and all that and how young girls are becoming more kind of sexualised in their image and being more aware of fashion at a younger age so I find there is a valid feminist argument, which I do agree with, that you know, it's not - really why bother you know? Why waste all this money and why paint your face and do your hair? But then the other part of me thinks, well a feminist means you're liberated to do what you want to do and if I want to put make-up on and do my hair then I should. It's me that's wasting time and me that's wasting money, but that's too simplistic because I know the industry you know, this male industry that's just manipulating women.

She articulated her understanding that her pleasures in fashioning were contradictory to feminism, but maintained a stance against notions of self-objectification.

AP: [...] When you are talking about all this fashioning, who are you doing it for? Who have you been doing it for?

Michelle: Me number one, and then the second lot is my friends because we know, you know, whereas other people like, maybe they are not into fashion can't really, you know, wouldn't really - I mean obviously if you look nice you like nice, but we know what's like - what's in and what isn't in – [...] I don't think any of the men or boys were that clued up on it, so it wasn't their - it didn't really need to get their kind of validation because they didn't know what they were talking about in the first place whereas my pals did. [...] I think a lot of women dress for themselves and a lot of men think that they are dressing for them. I mean, talking about the pleasure thing. I get pleasure from my female friends saying to me, "*Where did you get that?*" [...] That's the big thing, that we all talk to each other and that's where you get the pleasure, because you are talking to people who know about it. It's better than, you know, strangers or guys coming up. [...] The other thing that, just for future, I, I'm really aware how women have to dress depending on their circumstances, of where they are going and the way that other people react to you when you dress in a particular way and it really, really, really pisses me off. [...] Like, particularly like, see like clubby stuff, I mean, a lot of young women go out in short skirts or low cut tops and you see all these disgusting guys slobbering all over them and it really annoys me. [...] And that's what pisses me off about the men that are involved in the fashion industry because of their stuff is really anti-women, the clothes that they put out there, its so sexualised and revealing and the Vivienne Westwood - I don't know where she gets her ideas from. Her stuff's really offensive.

Although conceding a devotion to Posh Spice, Michelle was also critical of the impact of music culture: "*Because with things like, like the All Saints and they're meant to be like, more kind of women-orientated because they don't wear high heels and stuff, but then you think they are just as much, it's a different style but they are still pawns, I mean, they are all still wearing labelled gear and expensive clothing and their hairs all styled*".

<sup>116</sup> Michelle: There used to be comments made and I don't know if it was me, knowing that I was the only one that was into make-up, being on the defensive before anything was actually said, so when a comment was made it wasn't like an overt kind of - it wasn't cheeky or, or, it wasn't cheeky, but I took it that there was a wee underlying dig there. [...] Comments were made more than once it wasn't, I mean, I don't know whether it was me taking the defensive because I was feeling as though, at some point I was going to have to, it was an issue, kind of, not an issue, but you know, aye, it was an issue, aye, it was an issue and that annoyed me so I, I thought, oh, it annoyed me because you think, but at the same time I was on the defensive because I'm not quite reconciled I suppose within myself as well. [...] I still think, why are women doing this? You know, why do you spend all this money, all this time? You know, and not just on a personal level but the wider level, kids, just look at the way they are dressing and stuff and you think, Oh God. [...] I couldn't tell you a particular comment, it was just along the lines of, "*Oh look at you with all your make-up, and look at us*". I mean I was different because I had the make-up.



I remember thinking that I would wear less make-up and stuff that, you know and that I wasn't sure if it was right to be wearing make-up you know and that, sort of really making it, my make-up, sort of basic you know something that was sort of like, well, this is how I want, I want these things on but you know, it's got to be less and everything and having my hair cut actually and making it probably a bit more boyish you know, but I mean I was quite old then really you know I was, I suppose, when I talk about that, that was probably when I was way into my twenties and that was the age that I was at before there was a really big sort of feminist influence in my life but prior to that when I was less conscious of it, it was probably a subtle you know, changing process where I probably wasn't that aware that I was doing things a bit differently, you know and I sort of wore trousers more and stuff like that but certainly the feminist kind of time in my life was very tied up with my lesbianism as well and it was all it was the whole package of becoming a feminist lesbian and sort of altering my appearance in relation to that.

AP: [...] Why do you think you changed?

Sandy: I remember, I mean I'm going way back, but probably the first feminist that I ever read was *Burning Questions*, I don't know if you remember, Alix Kate Schulman and I remember then that sort of, kind of affected me and I thought yeah, but you know they are doing that and so on and what about me making choices and things, but that was a positive experience, but I do remember that when I sort of got onto the scene with more middle-class, middle-class women really I remember feeling guilty about my appearance [...] Feeling that I shouldn't wear make-up and I shouldn't look... and I remember women saying to me things like you know, "*Well you wear make-up for men.*" and I remember saying and saying it and hanging onto it that, "*No, I wear make-up for myself*" and if I wear make-up for anyone besides myself it's other women it's never been men, in my life you know when I was a straight woman I never, ever, I don't think there was ever a thought of I'm putting my make-up on what will a man think of me? It was, what will other women think about how I look? You know [...] enjoying it - I absolutely enjoy - I've always enjoyed...

AP: [...] you were saying that you felt guilty, but also do you think that there were taste issues for example or class issues?

Sandy: That's an interesting one, I think, for me personally I think I was very affected by what I picked up around me you know, feminist and class things at that time in my life and that how I looked was a compromise between what I wanted and liked and what pleased me and what I thought other people would, you know, how I would fit in with, yeah.



Noting the irony, Sandy suggested, based on her experience of salons:

It was a place for women to come together in a very feminist way and I mean, I can't imagine anyone sort of thinking, "Oh, you know, let's sort of do a play or something about feminism" and basing it in a hairdressing salon or something you know, but it was, because it was all about women going into the salon and calling their husbands, you know" [Laughter].

Many women articulated a rogue form of feminism.<sup>117</sup> Ettie claimed a brand of feminism that she could endorse, but perceived that this had been appropriated and/or excluded.<sup>118</sup> Some participants like Ann, had un/consciously implemented feminist strategies in salon and beauty course contexts.

It's the communication and working with so many different people and also that support thing, and realising that it's not about competition, I mean that's the sort of thing I actively discourage in the class, in a teaching class there is no competition here, you know you can't sort of give up in the team thing, if somebody was late because they had to pick their children up or something like that, then you get their place set up and you get organised for them and they'll do it for you do you know what I mean? That's much more important than being at the top of the class which was the way it was when I was at school.

In specific discussions about feminism and fashioning participants suggested that this was a vexed territory. For participants who had taken pleasures in the fashioning of themselves and others a movement into feminism entailed either a reluctant relinquishing of such pleasures to fit it and/or sustaining a conflicted and embattled relationship with feminism.<sup>119</sup> For most, feminism remained an

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<sup>117</sup> Whilst all but Michelle and Claire regarded feminists as 'they'.

<sup>118</sup> "They've taken feminism and moulded it to suit them. [...] I mean your grandmother would have been very like my grandmother, a powerful woman. I've never had a problem. I've never ever felt tyrannised by men because I always let them know first of all, I value me. [...] What annoys me is that it's a country that allowed Page Three, Madonna was on the other night, they are showing the Opium advert with her naked breasts and yet you were frowned upon if you breast fed in public, you would be frowned upon, you'd be told, "Why don't you go to toilet and do that." and I would just say, 'Well, why don't you take your dinner into the toilet and you eat your dinner in the toilet, I'm not feeding a baby in a toilet.' and I would do it discreetly, I mean, I could feed a baby like you know, the baby would be under there, so that is what annoys me about this, it's acceptable as a titillating thing to use [Laughter] how very graphic, titillating thing, but not acceptable as a natural born thing, so that's the kind of, I always get annoyed at that kind of stuff, feminism, I think of true feminists and I would say I probably am a true feminist that wants rights for women at home".

Ettie was also aware of issues of sexism in her own and other gendered fields:

Ettie: Oh yes, I think there's more now, a lot of women, but I still don't think they are as celebrated as men, if you look on the television and such and such a hairdo they bring in, it's nearly always a guy and he could do anything, he could urinate on the hair and stick a -[Laughter] [...] Just like chefs, the master chefs if it --

AP: - if you were doing it in the home. [Laughter]

Ettie: Domestic engineering. [Laughter]

<sup>119</sup> It must be said that Michelle did, as a feminist, consciously reject feminist 'taste'.



irrelevance or awareness of feminist fashioning was known only as a vestigial, half-memory of media caricatures.<sup>120</sup>

## Class

In both the popular press where the 'bimbo' and the 'slapper' are a cheap, media generated phenomena and the feminist press where a void prevails, working-class women's tastes, pleasures and fashioning excesses remain misrepresented and caricatured. In both fields, to a greater and lesser degree women's excessive fashioning has been associated with a lack of self-knowledge and a symbol of sexual availability.<sup>121</sup>

Hairdressers and women who fashion to excess are still frequently cited as polarised from those engaged in political, intellectual and academic work.<sup>122</sup> Though hairdressing has a small, gentrified, celebrity niche, the field as a whole is perceived as unskilled, unprofessionalised, working class and feminised. Although feminist researchers have begun to examine the role of women workers in beauty and related industries in more nuanced ways, caricatured assumptions about hairdressers and salon goers persist.<sup>123</sup> The professionalisation of the top tier of the industry from the late 1980s, has involved the coining of new professions, for example 'stylists' and 'colourists' and lucrative beauty and hair salons, retreats, treatments, designer products and celebrities now proliferate.<sup>124</sup> Their

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<sup>120</sup> Unfortunately, at the time of writing up this chapter, unreconstructed feminist spokespersons appeared just as unlikely to seek out dialogue with those engaged in fashioning femininity, or in opening up the discourse in this field. Critiquing the re-launched journal *Feminist Review* in a recent *Feminist Library Newsletter* Wolfe states, "Issue 71 (2002) is 'Fashion and Beauty' a subject which some more unreconstructed feminists might be surprised to find in an academic feminist journal." (Wolfe, 2002) The perception of feminist body policing, described by Michelle, is hinted at in Wolfe's tone apropos of inappropriate fashionings: "In a local supermarket, I spotted a Far East Asian young woman, maybe Chinese or Vietnamese, with what looked like a chain store bought stencilled henna pattern on her hand. When it comes to mercenary considerations, nothing is sacred" (ibid.).

<sup>121</sup> Skeggs notes that big hair, short skirts and lots of make-up are read as "devalued class signifiers of excess" (Skeggs, 2001, p. 302). The term bimbo was feminised around the 1920s (at the inception of the first publicly used salons...) coming to mean dumb blonde, 'often a prostitute' (Cassell's Dictionary of Slang, 1989 cited in Cox, 2000, p. 4). Pam Cox is one of the few feminist academics that has sought to interpret the meaning of a specific contemporary style of feminine excess, the so-called Essex Girl, "the archetypal blonde bimbo of the 1980s". However Cox acknowledges albeit to an academic conference audience that growing up in Essex in the 1980s, she had tried "to put as much distance as possible between myself and her kind". Cox interprets Essex Girls as within a trajectory of female folk devils, "a form of 'the degraded popular' which has been symbolised by images of certain white working class-women" (ibid. p. 1).

<sup>122</sup> For example, when the list of the first Peoples' Peers was attacked 'as a joke' (Michael, 2001, p. 7). (The 15 selected self-nominated Peoples Peers included seven knights and three professors) hairdressing was used by Lord Stevenson, the Commission's chairman as the exemplar of 'less hi-faluting people'. He conceded that a number of people had applied to sit in the Lords with some "less hi-faluting achievements." but noted "You haven't got your hairdresser in this list". Subsequently, the GMB put forward the name of Maria Hicks, a 27 year old hairdresser from Sheffield who stated: "I talk to people of all ages and different backgrounds every day and I think it is prejudiced to say only certain types should become peers." (The Guardian, 28 April, 2001) The remoteness of Essex Girls from academics is implied in Cox's comments that "Maybe the Mail of Sunday's answer to the question 'Whatever happened to Essex girl?' will be proved right – 'That she grew up and became a university project'. And maybe that won't be such a ludicrous idea after all" (Cox, 2000, p. 9).

<sup>123</sup> According to hair historian Caroline Cox, "The hairdresser is invariably assumed to be either an insincere flatterer who imposes the latest fashions on duped female customers, or a rather common sixteen year old who asks about holidays in Ibiza with an ear on Radio One. There is also the salon as local gossip shop where old grannies go for therapy" (Cox, 1999, p. 6).

<sup>124</sup> Bourdieu has discussed the process 'inventing new labels' for existing jobs, of physiotherapists "who count on this new title to separate themselves from masseurs" potters who call themselves art craftsmen and so forth. In this sense I read stylists as (bourgeois) hairdressers who are capitalising literally on their agency to appropriate words "donning the most flattering of all the available insignia... - a paper chase aimed at ensuring constant distinctive gaps, tend to produce a steady inflation of



spokespersons and profiles in the broadsheet media consistently highlight the difference between these leisure industries from local salons.<sup>125</sup> Glossies and broadsheets have followed the avant garde style magazines in celebrating a brand of “*brazen new barneteers*” (Anderson, 1998, p. 3). Connections are made between these new, experimental ‘wild men of hair’ inevitably set against the “*bog standard snipping-parlours*” (ibid), and their counterparts in the canon of art history.<sup>126</sup>

Both self-styled ‘Performance Artist’ Johnny Drill and colourist Nichola Clarke utilise ‘the artist as discover’ (i.e. appropriation), Dubuffet-like methods in their ‘research work’.<sup>127</sup> Drill was “*inspired by lobotomised hairdressing – looking at diagrams of people having brain operations.*” Clarke “*is a familiar sight in clubs, the history sections of W1 bookshops and on her local (post Clerkenwell, and suddenly a bit trendy) Kings Cross streets – where she fearlessly photographs prostitutes and eccentrics*”.<sup>128</sup> Keen to emphasise the difference of her work from that of others “*Nichola admits that she is not into making small talk while at toil*” (ibid.). Whilst visionary creativity is much sought after, the antithesis is seen as the literally outmoded, common customer with a taste for excess. A senior stylist at a top London salon confessed the worst crime the promoted ‘client’ could commit: “*The worst style to be asked for is a big ‘do’ – I’m talking Dolly Parton comb-outs. It’s so outdated and bimbo-ish. One of my former clients had bleached blonde hair and by the time she left the*

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titles....these classifications are the product of the struggles between the classes and depend on the power relations between them” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 481).

<sup>125</sup> The broadsheets have suggested an intellectualisation of the field. In a *Guardian* article entitled ‘Beauty and the Brain’, *Tatler* beauty editor and author of the *Thinking Woman’s Guide to Beauty*, Kathleen Baird-Murray stated: “*Beauty pages aren’t just for bimbos. Clever girls like lipstick too*”. She confesses her embarrassment about having such a lowbrow profession, finding it easier to lie about her profession than out herself as such at dinner parties and face social disapprobation. After demonstrating her insider credentials (she has literary and lawyer friends) she justified her work on the grounds that others with ‘intellectually demanding careers’ are increasingly both using beauty industries and investing in them. She cites Maria Kilgore: “*a savvy 33 year old New Yorker who created the bliss spas in New York and London who reports, ‘The bankers and the barristers think it is intelligent to look after themselves.’*” Baird Murray concludes: “*If you are still not prepared to out yourself as a beauty addict, remember this: Kilgore recently sold 70% of her company to VVMH for an estimated \$30m (£19m) Did somebody say bimbo?*” (Baird Murray 2002, pp. 8-9).

<sup>126</sup> “*Of all the wild men of hair, probably the most in demand is 36 year old Guido [...] Guido is keen to emphasise that ‘I don’t set out simply to shock. I am classically trained, though I’ve since broken all that down. But the training was important, otherwise you don’t really know why you are doing something and it’s just gratuitous.’ (Who does he think he is, Picasso?)*” (ibid.) Although celebrity hairdressers are deemed worthy of criticism, *The Guardian’s* tone is merely disdainful of the world of the working-class salon. In an article on the history of the haircut, illustrated with shots from the sneering, camp, coffee table volume *Bad Hair* (Innes-Smith and Webb, 2002) Guy Browning writes: “*Women’s Barbers. There isn’t really an equivalent of a barbers for women where you can get a quick trim for under a tenner. Instead there is a shadowy underworld of back-street hairdressers who you only get to hear about through word of mouth. This hairdresser is inevitably called Debbie and used to work in a posh salon until she had children and now she works part time doing select ladies hair...she often has to improvise with a Black and Decker Strimmer*”. Ironically a method more likely to be championed by Drill, see below (Browning 2002, p. 21).

<sup>127</sup> Jean Dubuffet, b.1901 is the Modern artist most closely associated with making work inspired by the unschooled art of ‘outsiders’, children, street artists and the art of the insane. His fascination with ‘primitive’ art culminated in his classifying of such art as *Art Brut*, triggering the industry of Outsider Art (MacGregor, 1976; Greenberg 1949; Hainsworth, 1992).

<sup>128</sup> The fascination with ‘underworlds’ including the sex industry and foreignness is a trope of Modernism. In stark contrast to Ronnie Spector’s account of being inspired by fashioning excesses in the streets *in her neighbourhood* (cited in Chapter 1) Jean Shrimpton displays a typically voyeuristic detachment in relating a fleeting, bohemian episode in her life with ‘Bailey’: “*We could not get into a hotel anywhere in the eight arrondissement [Paris] and finished up in a real fleabag of a place in the Algerian quarter near Belleville. It could not have been less like our usual watering holes. Not that we were bothered. Where we stayed never concerned us overmuch. I found the quartier fascinating. I was hanging out of the window, trying to find out how the prostitutes got their beehive hairdos all of two feet high.*” (Shrimpton, 1991, p. 92).



salon it was about five feet high – really hideous. I'd have rather have shaved it off" (*Red* magazine, August 2002, p. 80).<sup>129</sup>

The literature on hair, and the accounts of participants suggest that hairstyles are perceived as indubitably classed with big, artificial hairstyles linked to both working-class reality and myth.<sup>130</sup> In contemporary culture, excessive femininity engenders a paradoxical allure/repulsion for broadsheets such as the *Independent* and *The Guardian*; a foil to an underlying, historical allegiance to Modernist fashion agenda or alternatively, a camp joke.<sup>131</sup>

Ettie detailed the economic reasons why some women, from the 1960s on, would require the lacquered 'up' hairstyles – hairstyles that could be respectable and/or glamorous and that *lasted*:

We wouldnae get away with blow-drying, it was something I had to master there - there was no such thing as showers then, every week they would come in for a set and in between that they would maybe come in for a brush up, so the 'up' hairdo, we used to lacquer it, it was solid. [Laughter] It never moved. [...] Windy day or not, it stayed, so they would come in and get it tidied up or brushed up and that would be half the price of their hairdo – perms.<sup>132</sup>

She described the big hair that came to be associated with working-class women as being even further exaggerated or fashioned in the case of prostitutes: "*I'd put it this way, the prostitutes were way out, every bit exaggerated, flick ups - if it was up it was, you know, big hair*". In the same period, a

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<sup>129</sup> The tendency for middle-class appropriation of working-class culture (interestingly, Johnny Drill was trained at a salon called 'Sweaty Betty's') where today's 'common' is transmuted into an item with fashion *gravitas*, is wittily played out in *Street Talk: The Coronation Street Dictionary*. "Common: low life, a person considered to have appalling taste and dubious lifestyle. The social rule in Weatherfield is to pretend to be on a social rung higher than you in fact are, and never admit that your circumstances may have caused you to slip lower. 'Common' is a derisive term aimed at all with 'airs and graces' beyond their station, or those that dress up with more pretension to style than they may actually possess. As in 'all fur coat and no knickers', or 'mutton dressed as lamb'. Thus Annie Walker considered Elsie Tanner to be 'rather common' and Elsie in turn thought Hilda Ogden to be 'a bit common'. Hilda saw Elsie as 'proper common', but not Annie Walker. Vera Duckworth, on the other hand is considered 'common' by everybody. Paradoxically Bet Lynch's leopard skin coat might be 'common' in Weatherfield, but trendy in London. This means – a confusing point for outsiders here- that Bet's coat is literally uncommon in Coronation Street, but common among New Wave enthusiasts in London. If something, therefore, is 'common' it is quite likely to be uncommon – unlike Vera who is reassuringly 'common' all the time. For those interested in the fine tuning of such matters Jack Duckworth, who likes wearing medallions and slashed to the waist shirts is 'dead common' while Vera, by common consent is 'as common as muck'. Being common is clearly in the eye of the beholder." (Nown, 1986, pp28-29)

<sup>130</sup> Antoine, the first celebrity hairdresser set the agenda cautioning women to beware of 'old Marcells' and Cox notes that cheap versions became "a style associated with a rather tarty type of woman". Beauty historian Hanckel notes that the style was "practically unknown in the West End, but more in evidence among a certain type of the working class". (Hanckel quoted in Cox, 1999, p. 142).

<sup>131</sup> As in Cox's comment that: "There are still strongholds of the style [for big 'artificial' hairstyles] though, a Jurassic Park of kitsch hairdos found in American trailer parks and country and western chanteuses, where it is a significant symbol of survival" (Cox, 1999, p. 11). A somewhat voyeuristic fascination is articulated as paradoxically dismissive appropriations. "Pioneered by the big haired soulster James Brown, the bouffant is a silly style that can't understand why it is not taken seriously... [However] The bouffant has been reclaimed and re-coiffured by many of fashions big names, most noticeably the house of OTT, Versace" (*Independent*, unaccredited, 24 September, 2000, p. 5).

<sup>132</sup> For working-class schoolgirls like Elizabeth and her sisters, their mothers' tight budget and interpretation of respectability meant theirs would be very short, long-lasting haircuts: "Certainly when I was at school my mum insisted that I did go to the hairdressers and have my hair cut and I hated it because she used to have it cut far, far too short because it was money again [...] have it cut short to save money, I mean my hair didn't grow very fast anyway".





28. Brigitte Bardot, illustration in *Film Show* annual, 1962, page 38.



Jean Shrimpton, undated photograph, reproduced in, *Decades of Beauty*, Kate Mulvey and Melissa Richards, 1998, page 145



Bored with shoulder-length hair but don't really want to have it cut? Try out these super styles and you can look different every day — so start now for a completely new you!

# BE RIGHT ON TOP!

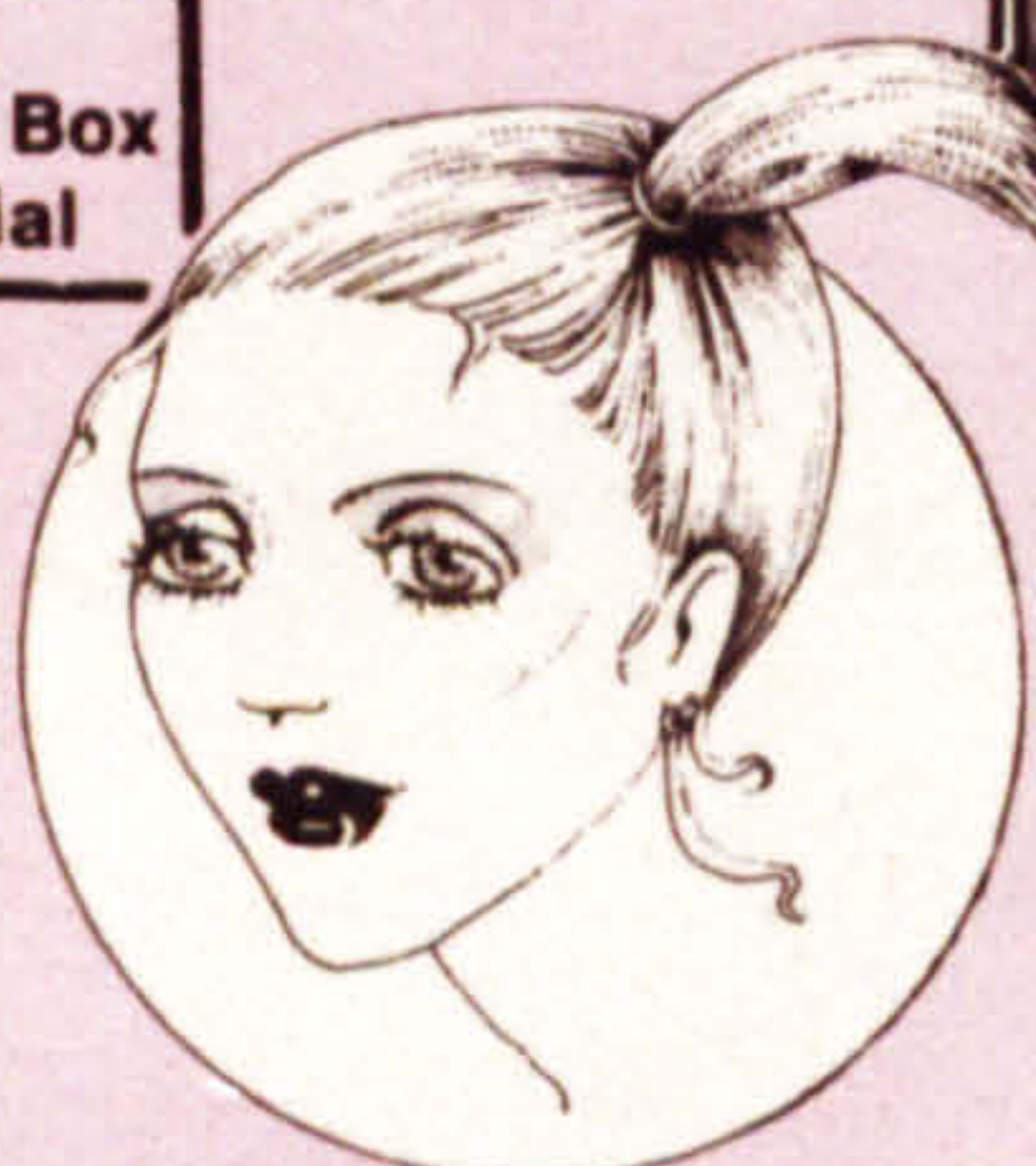
**Y**OU'LL need lots of hairgrips and special covered elastic hair bands which are on sale at most chemists and department stores. Ordinary rubber bands are rough and will break the hair shaft as they rub along the hair, so don't use them. Now you're ready for:

A  
Beauty Box  
Special



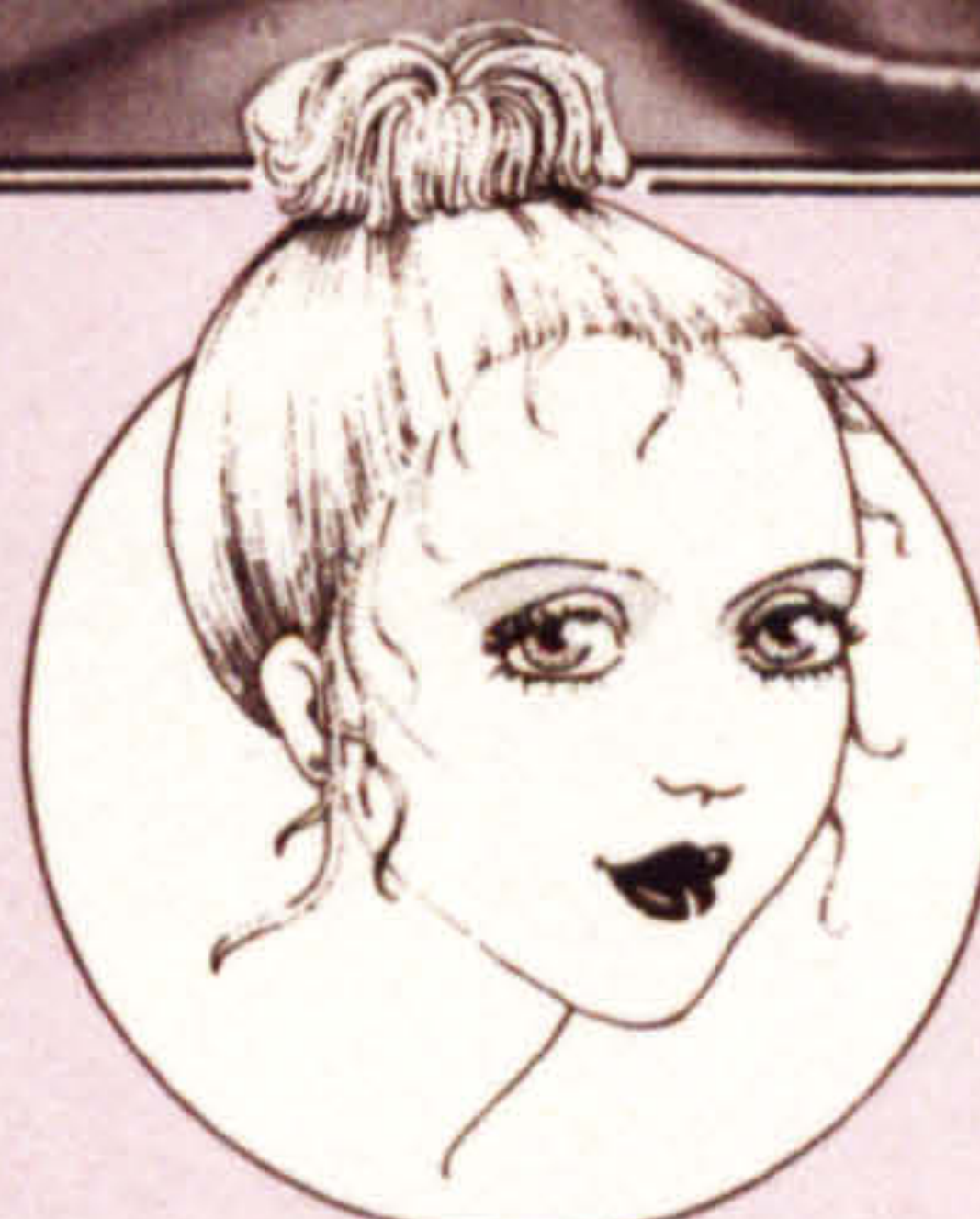
## MODEL-GIRL CHIGNON

Pull all the hair up on the top of your head and secure it with a band, then tuck all the ends under and secure them with grips. This will make a tight little bun that looks really good and will stay for hours, if you pin it up properly.



## SEVENTIES' PONYTAIL

Great . . . just pull the hair together to a point off centre and close to the front of your head and secure with a covered band. If your ponytail flops over and you'd rather have it straight, try back-combing the ends a little to make it stiff.



## THE PINEAPPLE

Gather all your hair together and secure on top with a covered band. Leave the ends to bounce loose as shown. This is a bubbly style that looks great for parties . . . try a simple pair of earrings to finish off the look.



## FIFTIES' PONYTAIL

This is really simple! Just draw all your hair into a band high up at the back of your head, then tie a really bright ribbon into a super bow for a really lively rock 'n' roll fifties' look!



## BALLERINA CHIGNON

This is a little bun at the back of the neck. Just pull all the hair to the back into a ponytail held with a band, then turn the ends under and secure them with grips to make a small, neat bun. Let a few wisps of hair escape to soften the hairline!



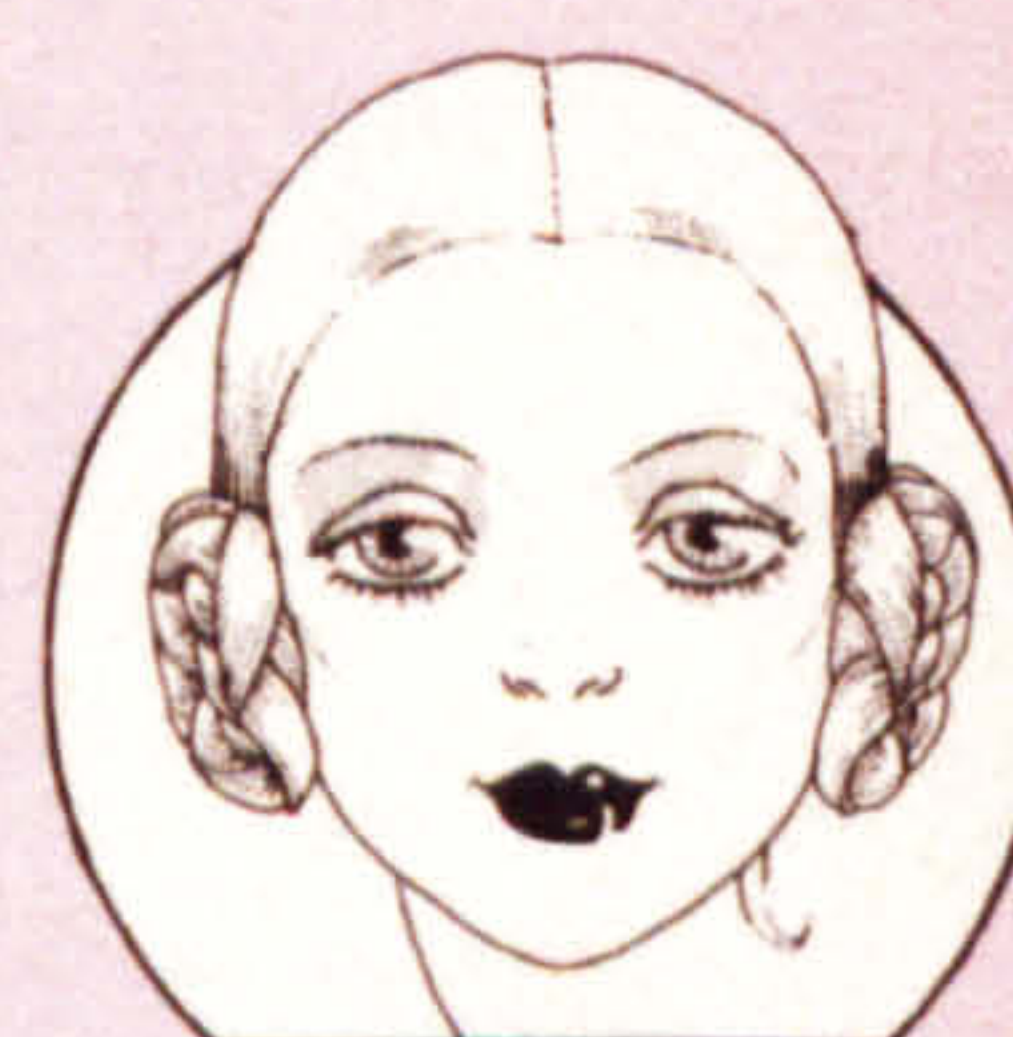
## PRE-RAPHAELITE BUNCHES

Nice for shoulder-length or longer hair. All you do is wash your hair and plait it into lots of tiny plaits while it's still wet! Let it dry naturally, then undo the plaits and you'll find you've got lovely, crinkly hair. Make two bunches high on the sides of your head, secured with covered bands.



## SWISS PLAITS

Part your hair in the middle and make a plait each side starting at ear level. Pull the plaits up across your head and secure them with grips. This style will show off your ears, so earrings will look really good.



## TWENTIES' HEADPHONES

Try this one just for fun! Part your hair in the middle and plait each side, starting at ear level. Coil each plait carefully into a wheel, over your ears, and pin securely so the coils sit over your ears!

All these styles will look best if your hair's clean and shining, so make it a rule to wash regularly with a shampoo that's made for your hair-type . . . greasy, normal or dry, or use a mild, medicated shampoo

if you have dandruff. Visit a good hairdresser every six weeks for a trim and don't be afraid to experiment with different styles. Your hair tells people a lot about you, so don't neglect it!



minority of middle-class youth were adopting freer hairstyles, arguably part of the inverted snobbery underpinning Habitat-style peasant chic.<sup>133</sup>

Some participants, working-class girls who attended Grammar Schools or schools with an intake from distinct social areas, vividly remembered the class divisions between modes of fashioning, for example Elizabeth commented,

Well, I definitely think the Brigitte Bardot long hair, or being allowed to grow your hair long if you were lucky enough to have that sort of hair, it was definitely middle class, yes, to me it was tied up a lot with like for example girls who were art students always seemed to have this sort of hair and girls who went to ballet class always had this sort of hair you know, and I always felt, and when you think about it you know, female art students you know, to me [...] was you know, like a kind of an epitome of femininity at that time and certainly ballerinas and ballet dancing and of course the two went together you know, I would loved to have gone to ballet class but my parents couldn't afford it so I think it was very, very much, you know, a middle-class thing, for example, I can remember going to - of course when I went to the Grammar School it was the very first time that I'd mixed with a lot of middle-class girls and the majority of them went to ballet, even if they had - usually they had their hair in plaits at school, but whenever we went to parties, which occasionally we did at one an others houses except mine -[Laughter]- I had a crap childhood, the girls always had ballet slippers on and their hair long and it was just like, those, these were the girls that were in these illustrations in these books you know, the girls that went to boarding school and they were at Grammar School and everything so, and I envied them having the kind of parents who allowed them to be like this, encouraged them to be feminine. I think was a big thing for me you know I was not encouraged to be feminine because everything was tied up with your spending time on yourself, your being vain.'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> For the avant garde both respectability and Hollywood-style glamour were being decried as out-moded. Model Jean Shrimpton was expected, at the start of her career in the early 1960s, to fashion her own hair for shoots without the assistance of a stylist even on occasion for *Vogue*. In the process she helped to construct the incipient style-that-is-not-fashioned approach that still prevails in bourgeois fashion culture and was the antithesis of the respectability/glamour sought by many contemporary working-class salon-goers: "Unfortunately I was never very good at it. I used to rush around London with my hair in rollers under a scarf, or try my best with the ratty hairpieces that were fashionable at the time. Not surprisingly I wasn't doing too well until Bailey created the Jean Shrimpton look, which needs hardly any hairdressing or make-up. After that I wasn't called upon to do much to my hair except comb it (sometimes not even that). I put it up or would pull it into a tarty ponytail as an alternative, but it was never what you would call a style" (Shrimpton, 1991, p. 52). Shrimpton and Bailey cultivated a stylistic intellectualism that was the antithesis of Hollywood and were disingenuous about glamour in fashion. Shrimpton found Bailey "naturally artistic. We went to art movies - film like *Last Year in Marienbad* and *Jules et Jim*. He loved Jacques Tati movies" (Shrimpton, 1991, p. 62). In fact, Shrimpton's hair fashioning can be interpreted as a British take on Bardotesque French styling. In the 1962 *Preview* film annual Eric Warman interviews that French star Mylene Demongeot and asks "There seems to be a fashion for French stars to wear their hair untidy. What do you think about this?" MD: I suppose my hair often looks untidy. But I am sure a woman gains nothing by spending hours and hours having her hair curled. I wash mine myself and never curl it... this is a waste of time" (Demongeot in Warman, ed. 1962, p. 37).

<sup>134</sup> Being dyed blonde had a significantly different meaning for participants than natural blonde as Carol's comments on Joni Mitchell suggest. This following memory work text foregrounds dress, hair and shoes as signifying status in a High School setting: *On the first day at High School A met girls who lived in its vicinity. The school was a bus ride away and in a posh area of town that was unknown to her. A noted that many were blonde, thin and beautiful. She realised that the name Susan (the name of her aunty and cousin) could be 'posh'. Their uniforms were a better quality than hers. A felt sad when she remembered that their expensive lightweight blazers were the ones that her grandma had rejected in the depressing school outfitters in favour of her thick wool version. Their shirts seemed new and blue white and they hung on their thin bodies. A recognised the expensive sensible Clarks shoes. She was conscious of her own inadequate thin hair that seemed pathetic, unstyled and colourless next to Susan #1's unusually thick, natural, blonde bob with flicks that had been meticulously 'tonged'. A was made aware through little affectionate remarks that Miss M, the form teacher, knew the posh girls and their parents.*



In the 1970s, in a break with tradition, many working-class girls experimented with variations on still fashioned but short skinhead styles including the ubiquitous 'feather-cut'. Ellen remembered these in contrast to the 'freestyle', 'poshies' look. *"Yeah, the hard nuts were sometimes quite short and quite cropped and the normally ones would - it was just all that hippy stuff, long and they still had it pulled back all the time."* And Michelle noted that at secondary school in the 1980s:

Michelle: There was a class divide with hairdos, a big class distinction [...] knowing it like, different girls from different areas would have different hairdos.

AP: And can you define that at all, can you remember?

Michelle: Curly perms seemed to be dead working class and scraped into a pony-tail, working class and kind of - I mean I was at Shawlands Academy so we had a big, big catchment area so a lot would be from the Gorbals and stuff used to come, a lot of the posher ones from Newlands and Shawlands used to go and they were all that private look the soft, blonde, flicked hair.

AP: Was that dyed hair then?

Michelle: No.

AP: No, just naturally blonde, short hair?

Michelle: Long

Ellen's impression was that affecting a middle-class disregard for fashioning feminine excess has increasingly come to characterise 'art student style' over the past twenty years.<sup>135</sup> Ellen articulated

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However, from another perspective, the allure of dissident fashions by the 'sensibly-shod' Michelle is remembered in this account: *"Sheila and I always got shoes out of Clarks, like proper shoes and when I went to Shawlands Academy I had moved from Drumchapel to Shawlands in the summer holidays between leaving Primary and Secondary and going for the day to see the school and I had on these Clarks shoes that kind of looked like Kickers but they weren't, they were Clarks and going ballistic to my Mum and saying, 'I'm not wearing these shoes. I'm just not wearing these shoes because everybody will know they are Clarks' and sure enough everybody had Kickers on and I remember throwing a real temper tantrum about not wearing these shoes, maybe that's where it all started with those Kickers. So eventually I did get a pair of Kickers."*

<sup>135</sup> A student herself in the 1970s she remembered both herself and her brother, cultivating a hippyish, 'arty' style – her Emmylou Harris period. A specific aspirant middle-class trope was to self-consciously combine thrift shop, second-hand or ethnic items with jeans, what Ettie remembers from her trip to America as, 'high class hippy': *"Well, I think like in general people do dress in a certain way to be identified with a certain type of person kind of, I mean, its like students, the ones especially from Glasgow, the ones that look the most like students are the ones that are absolutely minted, from like, parts of Glasgow – so it's a conscious effort to look this way I think, like, I don't know, I mean, I don't think even people who think they are opting out because they have got a specific look as well. I would say so, definitely that because that's the thing that amazes me nowadays, because you see people coming into the Art School building like and you think, 'neds' just because of the way they are dressed and yet they are not, they are students whereas really, twenty odd years ago, students were tweedy you know, that kind of tweed, and a definite look. Nobody really escapes fashion"*.



the essential formula for such a style *“taking a sort of glamorous item and mixing it with denim”*. But having worked in a liberal institution for two decades, she was now cautious about such claims to individuality:

I think the Art School isn't really as liberal as, I mean [...] it is quite old fashioned in some senses, as for the students, I think maybe not as much now, but back times it would have been easy to look at a student and you would know which department they came from, like me in my denims and my blooming pin-striped top, I thought I was so individual and different and I wasn't, I was part of that group, I mean you could tell the students, you could tell the photography students, I think you can even now, you would have a rough idea of which student belonged to which group.

The media association between working class-women's fashions, sexual availability and/or stupidity is in part reflected in the experiences of research participants. Ann remembered:

In the job I did [teaching a beauty course], though I was in working with women all the time, my bosses have always - the main senior management have always been men. But when I was eventually a Head of Department I was in with a lot of men at these meetings and I think that the assumption always was that I was thick because of my appearance, because I would probably be quite made up and with my hairdo, and there were assumptions made there and I don't know whether it worked to my advantage or disadvantage, because the thing was, I would be quite canny and I ended up with the most successful department if you like, because - and you know, I don't know whether that's because they assumed that I wasn't listening and they would be surprised because of the assumption of the way I looked.

Many participants remembered parental attitudes that demonised themselves or other women who dressed to excess. Frequently such attitudes linked excessive femininity with prostitution. Ettie who remembered, *“My mother was most ashamed of me dyeing my hair black – she said I looked like a prostitute”*. Jean also noted,

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The style was unisex in theory. Ellen's most prized garment from this period had been a retro jacket inherited from her aunt. She'd earlier lost a battle over her aunt's musquash coat with her record shop-managing brother. The jacket, worn with jeans, completed an iconic, still cherished look: *“It's a gorgeous little forties peplum and it goes in and out with the one button and it's dark, dark, navy blue and it's just gorgeous and I used to wear it with my denims and maybe just a wee plain, not a tucked in thing a thing that hung over and when I came back from Canada and I'd never had a sun tan in my life because I don't do the sun and I'm not that keen on it and I was a nice, not a golden brown just a colour, a different colour and there was a picture of me and I can't even remember where it is now but I remember when I look at that I think 'that's it.' [...] I can probably find you a picture of the top and the denims because I wore them for five years.”* [Laughter]



Oh it wasn't, it was that kind of godly thing, it wasn't right to be this way and to be over made with make-up and clothes too short, you know, skirts or dresses or low cut - you know, there wasn't that problem with me certainly but [Laughter] but you know what I mean? That was always still -

AP: And what do you think the associations there were there of somebody with cleavage?

Jean: Prostitution and it wasn't godly.<sup>136</sup>

Elizabeth's fascination with her friend's mother provoked her parents' disapproval.<sup>137</sup> and her aunty Hilary's fashionings were also viewed ambivalently by her mother having as she did painted nails, dyed hair and an 'exotic' look: "*Oh yes, I mean it was wonderful for me to think of myself having an exotic aunty, you know, the women who my mum was ashamed of, even though she looked up to her in lots of ways.*" However, social and parental attitudes failed to deter Elizabeth from experimenting with fashioning.<sup>138</sup> Ellen's aunty similarly caused fascination in her niece and disapprobation in her sister-in-law:

Well she must be well into her sixties now and she was a dancer when she was young and she wears these enormous high heels, I mean big, big, red, high heels. [...] She has got the piled up hair and the gold, she goes to Las Vegas twice a year and she has her hair done, she has it done twice a week, full shampoos and sets, I mean Mum's very, Mum wasn't that fond of Dad's family because they were a bit low class, which wasnae their fault but they were a bit low class (Laughs) but the ones that went to Canada are nice people and they are, they're all very Catholic and Catholics have a real tendency, and I know that it's probably isn't right to say but it is true, they have a kind of forgiving, niceness about them, a kindness, my aunt Moira is the kindest person you could ever wish to meet, but there was aunt Moira and her sister Margaret and her mother, who was my Dad's aunty Maggie, and they were like the Three Degrees, [...]. (Laughter) [...] Pink kaftans and big piles of hair, big rings and lashes.

Adele: Nail varnish?

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<sup>136</sup> Although there is no scope in this thesis to discuss the links between feminine excess, cleavage, ethnicity and class a comment made still be made about Modernist/Feminist preference for representing women without it. Again, Shrimpton (and Twiggy) provided something of an archetype: "*It was always a terrible strain for me to appear to have bosoms*" (Shrimpton, 1991, p. 86).

<sup>137</sup> "*Her mother worked for a start off and she did something terribly disreputable in that she worked on the Tote and she was always very, very glamorously dressed, I think my mum and neighbours with similar views to her, saw Mrs Botham as hardly more than a prostitute because you know, because she, you know, she did work at the Tote which was you know, if not a scandal you know, I mean, not a nice thing to do*".

<sup>138</sup> Yes, I did wear lipstick and it was very pale pink and I think it was influenced then by the Italian thing in the 1950s, very much influenced by Sophia Loren and, oh yes, I remember the first time, I know it's not hair, but the first time I wore - I painted my nails, John, my Dad went absolutely mental because that, that was, it was only prostitutes in his idea, his head that painted their nails and it was red, I painted them red and that was like, you know, and I just didn't understand why he was so angry. [...] One time he did say, "*You go out trying to look like bloody Sophia Loren*" so I think I must have done a decent job on myself.





**dollop:** a shapeless lump. As in, 'Sausage, egg and a dollop of mashed potato, Phyllis luv.' In everyday use in North America.  
**dolly blue:** a blue twist of fabric containing an agent for whitening clothes.  
**donkev stone:** a soft stone used to colour or whiten a doorstep or window-sill.

30. The character Bet Lynch defines 'dolled-up' in *Street talk, the language of Coronation Street*, 1996, Jeffrey Miller and Graham Nown, page 35.



Ellen: Nail varnish, aunt Moira was a nail varnisher yes, aha. She gave me her cast off cat suits, I usually – I mean we are talking here like leopard skin cat suits, she has got the most fantastic figure, she still wears a size ten now, and she's always kept really trim, she's fantastic looking, fantastic.<sup>139</sup>

Participant's accounts produced an array of information about social degrees of respectability in the fashioning of femininity in specific historical moments. Elizabeth noted how the emergence of the tousled look, read by her as both expressing and being identified with by middle-class girls, represented an assault on prevailing notions of respectability:

It represented a massive, massive change because prior to that what mattered more than anything was respectability. You know, that was the message that was coming through from parents all the time in the 1950s, there's absolutely no doubt about that at all you know, you have to be respectable above absolutely everything else and to have had, I mean even if you had a perm at that time the perm was - you still looked respectable, you had to have a respectable looking perm.<sup>140</sup>

Women also shared information about their own hair histories, shifting identifications, and view of themselves and others in terms of appropriate and inappropriate fashionings. Ann outlined the difficulties in defining 'tartiness' or 'tackiness' precisely, but related such terms to notions of class and taste.<sup>141</sup> Maureen felt strongly that people's value should not be judged by their hair, implying that she knew this to happen:

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<sup>139</sup> The notion of being 'dolloed-up' is a pejorative accusation of vanity in women, the antithesis of respectable demureness. In a memory work text A remembered it as a term used by her granddad to tease her or other female relatives and their attempts at glamour. The term was imported from America in the pre-war period: "*Dolloed up: dressed in one's best clothes, or finery, for a special occasion. As in 'Where's she off to all dolloed up?' The word formally became British in 1934 when published in an appendix of mostly US expressions in the Concise Oxford Dictionary*" (Nown, 1986, p. 35).

<sup>140</sup> Durbin also connected respectable fashioning with class and destiny "*We were of course Good Girls and Nice Boys [the boys had crew cuts the girls should length page boys] well-behaved middle class children, the future leaders of our country*" (Durbin 1973, p. 14) The impact of an outlaw, home-made Dusty-type peroxide bouffant or beehive even by the mid 1960s can be measured in part against the demure styles recommended for teenagers by contemporary magazines. In the *Women's Own Book of 70 Fabulous Hairstyles You Can Set Yourself* (2 April, 1966) perhaps the most daring, Style 28 "*an ultra modern style for Miss 1966*" reflects the influence of Sassoon.

<sup>141</sup> "Yes, yes, I suppose there's always - if you are talking about a sort of class thing, then I suppose there would be there's the sort of tarty, if you like, end, which would be - I don't know where that is because I think I am quite naturally quite tarty faced, and always have been and I don't know why that is, you know, I just kind of have and some people have, sort of, have that kind of face. I suppose more middle-class women would perhaps have less tacky tastes."

Just as I was unprepared for and bemused by Ann's self-identification as 'tarty', other participants' self-identifications often did not square with my own perceptions of their fashioning. Michelle's self-identification highlighted the complexity of constructing an embodied sense of self, in contemporary culture: "*Well, I think if you were looking at me then you would say this kind of middle-class, maybe affluent looking, just because the clothes that I wear aren't cheap clothes, but its not to say that I'm not trying to project that image [...] Well, I mean coming from a working-class background, been involved in feminist politics, raised in a single parent household in quite a nice part of the city, I mean Shawlands - its not - so its definitely - now its definitely a middle class - but then we're all socialists, we're all, you know*".



I've known people who - that don't even, I've heard people saying that they don't comb their hair and I don't comb mine and look at the state of mine, but I think it's just like a lot a people think it's just like a fantasy thing that's no big deal. [...] It doesn't make you a better person, it doesn't make you any better than them, but people think that are the better and they are above you.

Gabrielle had also experienced discrimination on the grounds of class at the hands of hairdressers: "*Yes there's been one or two hairdressers where I haven't liked because they seem as though - I sort of wasn't best enough for their clientele, sort of thing, do you know what I mean? A bit snobbish and I went about three or four times and I stopped*".<sup>142</sup> She had only had the opportunity to consider spending money on herself after she started work, visits to the hairdresser had become an occasional treat:

They seem to look down and intimidate you somehow. I didn't feel comfortable there [...] I think it was - I think it was me working in a factory and there was a lot of women there that was always dressed up when they went. Well I didn't go dressed up, I thought, 'I'm having my hair done and I'm not going dressed up I'm just going-', in fact, I used to go from work many a time, you know, in my work clothes.

Gabrielle and Jean had found the fashioning of *nouveau riche* middle-class women to be excessive and inappropriate:

Gabrielle: There are one or two women where I go now, they always have a lot to say, where me, I just go there to get my hair done and not -. Well there's one woman in particular that goes there, she used to be a business woman and she owned some sort of DIY store which has closed down now, she talks and talks and talks every - she has her hair blow dried and when Joyce has finished she always gets up, picks the spray up and does it all herself again, sprays it all you know, but she seems to me like she thinks she's a bit cut above you know...<sup>143</sup>

Following the widespread commercialisation of the beauty industries it became possible for some working-class women to replicate the fashions of their so-called betters. Hairdressers like Ettie, who were

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<sup>142</sup> After our interview, her daughter Evelyn revealed that on a special occasion Gabrielle had booked into Vidal Sassoon's and had left in tears after feeling judged. Jackie said that she had once gone to Rita Rusk's exclusive Glasgow salon for a hairdo but had been very put off because they had given off the impression 'artist at work'.

<sup>143</sup> During her period working at a Jewish women's hair salon, McRobbie noticed that it was her wealthy clients that were scorned for aping the middle classes. Their vulgarity was expressed in their ostentatious display of 'feminine excess': "*Our ladies [...] eschewed natural maternal looks in favour of sheer artifice, some[...] wore too much make-up and too many bracelets*" (McRobbie 1986, pp. 16-17).



fashioning everyone from stars to teachers, prostitutes and beauty queens, the means of fashioning diverse hair identities became possible. Both Ettie and Sandy experimented on themselves, friends and co-workers: *“It was all make-up, flicks that flicked out, the cottage loaf, French roll, the bun, you know, the artistic bun, or the plain, you know, tendrils, Eton crop, I used to crop - I got to the stage where I cropped my hair and my mother went mad at that as well, she went mad at everything”*. [Laughter]

The explosion of home hairdressing products in the 1960s led to what I am tempted to define as the democratising effect of bouffanting, a style ultimately adopted across class divisions but cherished by many working-class women. The style could be easily achieved without resort to a salon and regardless of hair ‘quality’. It required the most rudimentary of tools: a comb and lacquer, dye and optional hairpins, only one basic technique was essential, back-combing, and yet from the late 1950s it symbolised variously femininity, dissidence and glamour. The pleasures of bouffanting and the association of home hairdressing with somewhat unregulated, dissident hair fashioning by women was curtailed by the impact of new self-consciously natural and yet ironically unattainable stylings epitomised for Elizabeth by the tousled Brigitte Bardot and the Modernist young middle-class chic of Quant and Sassoon.

Elizabeth: When, after bouffant, when I suppose I’d be in my twenties then [...] the mod period came in and yes Mary - it was absolutely fantastic the impact of Mary Quant and what’s he called?

AP: Vidal Sassoon?

Elizabeth: Vidal Sassoon, definitely. And I think it was then that, again, I had this massive feeling that I couldn’t be feminine, before - I couldn’t have yards of - [Laughter] - you know, wonderful hair and then suddenly I couldn’t have - I could have a bouffant because everybody could, because of the technique you know, but it was hair lacquer and all this sort of thing but this natural, you know, this cut, you had to have, you could only look like that if you had strong, thick hair, straight hair, which I didn’t have, so I tried to achieve it through rollers and that sort of stuff but it was just, you know, it was just so unsatisfactory.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth also stated that she felt that she could never have been a Mod with curly hair, like her sister.



As the Hippy aesthetic overlapped with Mod fashioning a proto -feminist fashioning for women emerged shifting the perception of 'good' hair towards a post-Sassoon Modernist free-styling, a relinquishing for many women of the emancipatory promise of the bouffant.<sup>145</sup>

Within the hairdressing field, high and low-class salons were recognised by participants and are clearly identifiable, by location, price and marketing, if any. Some participants had had experience of either visiting or working at salons generally frequented by working-class or middle-class clientele. Sandy noted some differences in both the way customers and hairdressing staff were treated.

I did go to work in a very, very middle-class, Jewish women's salon in King Street, yeah, and there was a massive difference about, just what you are talking about, because in 'Marjory's' it was very much left to us but - certainly more to Marjory really than us - I mean, it was like, she'd tell us what to do and it was, like, standard there, was about four different hairstyles and that was it, you know, and it would be like, "*Do you want flick-ups, love?*" or "*Do you want it back, love?*" or "*Do you want-*" I mean we used to call them 'horned curls', "*Do you want horned curls, love?*" it was just that, you know "*Do you want...?*", I mean, the only other question was, "*Do you want back-combing love?*", you know, and it was just like, there were about - I mean, there weren't - there were, sort of, not many variations on a theme, but when - that is so completely different to when I started working on King Street at this salon there, and it was these two very, very middle-class sisters and they used to drink gin while they were doing, you know, it was like a set thing, you know - it - there was nothing peculiar about it, they used to drink gin and tonics while they were doing the hair. It was back-washes and everything then and the clients were called, you know, clients and they used to come in they said "*What do you fancy today, darling?*" you know, and "*Ohh darling. Oh take it up here*", you know, and they had - it was really - so I am glad I had that experience. I didn't last a very long time there because it was a total culture shock to me, but that was so different.

The more directive approach of both salon managers and customers in up-market salons was reflected in decisions made on stylings of both clients and junior staff:

Sandy: I had my hair cut off in fact actually the first time, I had long hair until I went to that 'Joan Partington's' and they just - I started and they said, "*We've got to cut your hair*" and they cut my hair into a bob, a bouncy bob and they gave me some fine streaks. [...]

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<sup>145</sup> One of the triggers for the direction of this research came through discussions with feminists and lesbians including Jean about their choice of men's barbers as hairdressers. The ideological logic of this in terms of equality issues or on an economic or political basis or the argument that they were getting a 'unisex cut' seemed unconvincing to me, but yet more evidence of an aspect of feminist taste paradox that stated do/don't look like men.



AP: So did the - did any of the customers in either of the salons ever bring in a picture of something that they had seen either on - wherever, and ask you to do it, you know, to do one of them?

Sandy: Well, certainly at 'Marjory's' that would have been a rarity and it was only young girls who - that did that, but young girls did it, and they did it like for the weddings and things like that, you know [...] but certainly in, in the King Street salon that I worked in, which was called 'Miss Partington's' [...] they did, they brought magazines in and they, sort of, came in with an armful of magazines and there was a lot more time to spend on talking about the hairstyle and planning it. As much time as doing the hair, which was the complete opposite to - at 'Marjory's', yeah.<sup>146</sup>

Ettie, who had worked in the widest range of hairdressing contexts was critical of the atmosphere to be found in the high status salons:

The majority of hairdressers want to be the glamour - and I had my day at that, I've had my day of spoiled women and there's a lot of spoiled women as well, it wasn't all nice clients, there were horrible clients because you'd hardly touch - "*You're hurting my head, you're pulling my hair*" you know, they'd maybe had a bad night at home or whatever rich, spoiled, not - there were some lovely rich people, don't get me wrong, but they wouldn't put their hand down their own loo to clean their own toilet.

Sandy disclosed some activities in 'Miss Partington's', up-market salon that would not have been deemed respectable at 'Marjory's':

Sandy: I can certainly remember having sexual contact with customers.

AP: Oh?

Sandy: Yeah, and I don't mean that in sort of - but just sort of, very subtle, very soft, kind of, you know, [...] grabbing hold of you and, you know - and there was loads - but that was rife at 'Miss Partington's', they used to use my chest as a pillow for the women's heads while they plucked their eyebrows and they used to say - and even then I had quite a sticky-out chest - and I used to say - and they didn't - they were all quite flat-chested, and they didn't wear bras and things like that, these women they were really big, they were like tall sort of Vogue type women, these two sisters who ran this place, and they used to say, "*Oh she's got a lovely little chest come on, darling, put your head on*

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<sup>146</sup> Interestingly, Mrs Lohead was the only customer at 'La Paris' who admitted that she had brought images into the salon for hairdressers to copy.



*there isn't that a lovely pillow for you?",* but there was like real sexual undertones to it for sure. No doubt about it. And when they came in, they used to undress, now that was just - at Marjory's it wouldn't have ever been - they used take their clothes off and just put a gown on and they used to just take their clothes off and put, you know, and there was like real - at 'Joan Partington's' it was like, it was quite a sexy, sexy thing, the whole thing having your hair done and that and –

As has already been noted, for some women working in the context of salons ensured contact with a spectrum of customers. For others, like Ettie it was a route to a better life. She found Manhattan to be relatively classless with greater opportunities for herself and her husband. In this account Ettie described how her own ambitions contrasted with her aunt's expectations. Ettie's aunt had warned that she was lucky to have found a salon where she was paid the same as in Glasgow:

I was a good hairdresser. I said, *"No, if that's the way he pays me, like this"* – I was earning that at home, [...] that was like thirty odd dollars. *"I didn't cross the Atlantic"* I said, *"I'm here to make money."* So, I knew at that point I needed to make it quick, I was with child so I went into Manhattan, looked up - phoned up - Bill Bailey was the name of one of the fabulous beauty salons, 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue, it was in the lobby of the Belmont Plaza in New York. *"That's a high-class salon"* says my aunt, I said, *"Well I'm a high-class hairdresser."* [Laughter] because in comparison I had to stay in the salon 'Cut and Curl'. I gave a week's notice. Young people in the sixties were very quick, they didn't need a book of instructions, you cottoned on very quick, maybe because it was where I came from, you were streetwise as they call it now, you weren't aware then, you had to make - suss things out very quickly, make your decisions, however, [...] My aunt was quite annoyed at me stepping out of my station and I wasn't - and I think others should know that you're not, you shouldn't be what people give you, you should be yourself.

### **Hairdressing as a low status profession for women**

Notwithstanding the development, particularly from the 1960s on of an elite strand of hairdressers and salons, the field has suffered from low esteem to the degree that pursuing this profession is regarded even at a governmental level as a specific sign of lack of ambition in women.<sup>147</sup> In sharp contrast to masculinised industries in Glasgow where the Red Clydesiders have been both

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<sup>147</sup> For example, New Labour's Baroness Jay and Tessa Jowell the former minister for Women in the Commons were criticised in 2000 for their 'patronising' attitudes to young women in both the ill-received 'anorexia summit' at 10 Downing Street and in their endorsement of a Government report urging girls to consider alternatives to hairdressing as a career (Prescott, 2000, p. 16). Feminist and governmental neglect of the 'glass ceiling' in hairdressing may be a spurious criticism but feminism's generalised critique of fashioning femininity requires revision.



romanticised and canonised in arts representations, heritage industries and museums, this feminised field has remained poorly paid, perceived as unpoliticised indeed counter-revolutionary and an appropriate subject for comedy. Being a largely non-unionised field with many temporary and part-time workers, careers continue to be problematic particularly for women with dependants.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, Ettie regarded hairdressing as a vocation, a more desirable field than shop work or accounting:

I was unsettled in Copelands, up in the counting house I was and I hated it, in an office I used to think, Oh god forbid that I'll ever spend my life with the same people everyday. I wanted to be in a hairdressers, where the world is put to rights, really, people coming in and I wanted this. To me it was like a theatre, that's what to me it was like - everyday changing -different clients coming in, different needs, different professions, different worlds coming in to you, that's what I loved about it.<sup>149</sup>

For aspirant first-generation Irish immigrants to Scotland like Ettie's mother, her daughter's ambitions were considered a 'disappointment':<sup>150</sup>

Ettie: She'd great dreams of a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a whatever, professional, another word that I hate I've got to say because it's tagged onto - it is discrimination and they need to get that out the road and value everybody, from the girl that's serving us here right up to the guy that made it, right up to the whoever owns it, you know, and the interior designer that made - so, mummy had this great plan of her two daughters making it, God love her, a big disappointment, she actually said that to me, when I went into hairdressing, *"What a disappointment"*

AP: Why did she say that?

Ettie: Because she wanted - she had - and society's the same, she wanted doctor, lawyer, teacher, respect - respected professions.

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<sup>148</sup> Many women reluctantly interrupted careers where there is negligible organised childcare support. Ettie gave up a potentially rewarding career in Manhattan and returned to Glasgow because of a pregnancy. Ann, who became Head of Department of a Beauty Course, lost touch with her best friend another promising student who left for an arranged marriage. Pauline took ten years out of her hairdressing course to marry and have children.

<sup>149</sup> Sandy and Ann both noted the usefulness of their training in hairdressing for their future careers. Ettie still hairdressers for free at hostels for the homeless indicating that her work was never merely a means to an end.

<sup>150</sup> Ettie demonstrated her awareness of the racism and class struggles that her mother's generation had had to endure: *"Very intelligent people, but they were given the menial jobs. She ended up in the laundry in Oakbank Hospital, but she had a thirst for education, buying all the books - a lot of my family is educated, so my mother did quite well, not by today's standards, but she got a dairy, she was a business woman, she started working in the dairy and then bought the place that she worked in at 14, and that was a lot to do, a big achievement then"*.



Despite offering little in the way of career opportunities or rewards, and requiring a significant investment of time and money, Ettie had been committed to the field:

I went into hairdressing, couldn't get in so easily, it was a bit like the Art School, you don't get in the first time, that was back then, because you had to pay a fee, and that was a lot of money, six, I think it was £65, now, that was what, six weeks wages because at that time a good wage was £10 a week, so it was a big outlay for my mother to put in. So I appreciate her very much for that, she never said "*No, you're not*". It was a disappointment, she wanted a professional. I think she accepted that she couldn't change and funded - which I'm ever grateful to her for and I always looked on it like a profession, just as important as the doctor, the chiropodist because you are raising people's spirits.

She viewed her work as an important profession despite her experience of related health problems, unsociable hours and poor pay and conditions:<sup>151</sup>

Well any profession, and I call it a profession still, that works for people for nine and ten hours and that's what it was then, twelve hours I did in Partick, this is after I got married, from nine in the morning to nine at night with half an hour off, no tea breaks outside of that. [...] - I'm calling it a career, profession I would call it - it's not treated as a profession it's treated as - it's like nothing, it's no value you know, hairdressers.

She had found more recognition and better pay in Manhattan:

I'd be doing a head of hair and he'd come over, [The manager] "*Oh my God what's that?*" with your name on a cheque, "*That's your monthly bonus, honey.*" and I'd say, "*That's fantastic*". Sixty-five, or sixty-seven, or sixty-eight, sixty something, in one month. [...] it was a lot of money, it was like a week's wages added on so, that was great, and they loved to hear you speaking, I said, "*Well, that's great, thank God you know*", "*Glad to see you get it, honey*" that was the attitude of the boss there. If I could have brought the job back, and the attitudes, and the value, how they valued you. [...] I might have stayed there for five years if I hadn't had a child.

Ettie signalled an awareness both of the continuing degraded status of the job, regardless of experience and the particular skills required over and above dressing hair.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ettie had had two operations on her varicose veins and a thrombosis that had curtailed her volunteer hairdressing work at a homeless persons refuge: "*So I would go to them and enjoy the crack on a Tuesday night and I did that for about six years at the refuge and I had to get a leg operation, my varicose veins done for the second time and limited to two hours as long as I could stand, so while I was away getting my operation, thank God, another hairdresser took over, so I just do the hostels just now.*"



## Men and hair fashioning

In the concluding section of this chapter I address issues of gender in the hair fashioning field in an attempt to further contextualise the data, and the references made to men in participants' accounts.

An ironic aspect of the hairdressing industry is that although today it is perceived as a feminised field, its canon, the elite stylists and characteristic signature branding in product lines are almost comprehensively male.<sup>153</sup> In the early part of the twentieth century Antoine styled his career on the template created by his contemporaries in the world of fashion, Coco Chanel and Madeleine Vionnet, the first couturiers to be 'canonised' (ibid. p. 92).<sup>154</sup> For Antoine and Guillaume an association with the developing Modernist aesthetic was of the utmost importance in both ensuring serious critical attention and dissociation from feminine excess, and the banality of commercial concerns. The dominance of male stars in the British hairdressing industry began with Raymond, Freddie French and René, and, as Cox has stated, "*by the end of the 1950s the domination of men in the hairdressing industry was taken as a matter of course and the standard textbook for the prospective employee, The Craft of Ladies' Hairdressing, still directed its advice entirely at the young man who wanted to enter the profession*" (ibid. p. 93).<sup>155</sup>

Sassoon's heroic conception, the five-point cut became the apotheosis of Modernism in hairdressing,<sup>156</sup> His directive approach provided the model for contemporary stars being centred on the

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<sup>152</sup> "When I went into the employment exchange last week and looked at what they were offering, what was it £4.50 to £5 depending on experience and I thought £5 an hour, for a craft, and it really is a craft... God, you get counselled now if you trip over the pavement, however, we were the counsellors unpaid".

<sup>153</sup> Cox has noted that at the outset it was a field controlled and dominated by men. The census taken in London at the turn of the 19/20<sup>th</sup> century showed that "*only one in ten people involved in hairdressing work were women and they were mainly cashiers*". (Cox, 1999, p. 71). Hairdressers today with their own product ranges include Charles Worthington, Nicky Clarke, James Brown, Toni and Guy, Vidal Sassoon, Trevor Sorbie and John Frieda. In black hairdressing the most well known and prestigious is Errol Douglas, the only Black person to be nominated for a Hairdresser of the Year Award. As striking as the 'glass ceiling' operating in this field may be, there has been little socialist/feminist activism or campaigning to address it.

<sup>154</sup> Like Chanel, Antoine capitalised on the notion of claiming for his work an artistic aura and disingenuously underplaying the commercial aspects of the field. Antoine saw hairdressing "*as an art form like sculpture*". Guillaume, based in Paris, the epicentre of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century hairdressing, created the styles for the presentation of the New Look (ibid. p. 92).

<sup>155</sup> Rose Evansky was one of the very few women hairdressers of renown in the industry. (Sassoon, 1968, p. 28) Sassoon's account of learning from the Parisian masters is a familiar narrative -the story of an artistic post war diaspora of proto Modernist hairdressers mirroring that used to describe the pan-European and American influence of the émigrés from the Bauhaus: "*I came under the influence not only of Raymond, but of other great artists, Like Freddie French and Rene, who had come over from Paris to set up a salon*" (ibid. p. 69). 'Canonical' artists and visionary themes are restated in several episodes recalled from his early career: "*So one night I wandered down to the Hairdressing Academy in Charlotte Street. There senior men demonstrated their techniques, their styles, their ideas, while the younger ones watch and learn. (Ibid p. 56)[...] I used to watch Freddie at the Academy. I would stand there enthralled, but, I am sorry to say, I was one of the very few who understood what he was doing. He was so way out, so new so utterly different, that some of the audience laughed, which used to make me furious. They did not realise that here was a man who was going to change hairdressing, sweep away the rigid, set look and replace it with something soft and simple, fresh, natural and swinging in every sense of the word*" (ibid. p. 69).

<sup>156</sup> According to Sassoon, the cut was conceived on an unwilling, hysterically protesting woman client, as disciples slowly gathered round the master at work: "*And that children is how the five-point cut was born. I regard it as the finest cut I have ever created; the geometric design in its purest most classical form... the only real worry I had was about Clare. After all it was her hair and I had made her unhappy*" (ibid. p. 145). Cox states that the five-point cut was created by Sassoon to be "*the purest,*





31. Vidal Sassoon learns from a master. Adolf Cohen on a visit to Sassoon's Bond Street salon in the early 1960s. Uncredited photograph, illustration 34, in *Sorry I kept you waiting madam*, Vidal Sassoon, 1968.



author of a so-called 'signature' cut.<sup>157</sup> Sassoon's referencing of Modernist principles, was a blueprint for the elite hairdressers who would subsequently position themselves in the canon. His affiliation with Mary Quant, mirroring Antoine's with Chanel before him, consolidated his fame. Sassoon claimed that whilst cutting Quant's hair he uttered the Modernist mantra "*I'm going to cut the hair like you cut the material. No fuss. No ornamentation*" (Sassoon, 1968, p. 121).

Stellar hairdressers today have forged associations with both artistic and design communities.<sup>158</sup> Following Sassoon, Drill's approach was explicitly about authorship, he stated "*You had no choice you got what you were given...I wasn't that interested if people liked it or not*" (Anderson, 1998, p. 3).<sup>159</sup> With the emergence of Drill, a somewhat self-conscious, post-punk masculinity was being introduced into the elite field.<sup>160</sup> This departure can be viewed in a context where exaggerations of both masculinity and femininity have been seen as necessary commercial consequences for men to succeed in the field.<sup>161</sup> "*Hairdresser's developed strategies to cope with these popular notions realising that 'the majority of women thought that unless you were both queer and French you could not possibly be a good hairdresser.'*" (Raymond cited by Cox, *ibid.* p94)<sup>162</sup>

Although she had female co-workers, also Ettie remembered that in the 1960s "*We had boys working in the salon, lovely boys, lovely young boys and your boss was always, nearly always, a male in those days*".

Despite its perceived feminisation, the field of hairdressing remains patriarchal in structure. The contemporary hairdressing elite reiterates the masculine/feminine, artist/model or muse, active/passive binary oppositional paradigm. However, in the accounts of participants, of their own and others' fashioning, men make up a complex heterogeneous group at variance to this model of power. Partners,

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most modernist style he could envisage with Bauhaus principles at its core" (Cox, 1999, p. 121). He "*applied the [Bauhaus] principles of functionalism and truth to materials to develop a pared-down look for hair, redefining the 1920s bob for a 1960s audience*" (*ibid.* p. 123).

<sup>157</sup> Much like the media construction of the trademark volatility of celebrity chefs in Britain in the 1980s.

<sup>158</sup> The celebrity status of contemporary salon managers is reflected in the salaries earned, £100,000+ per annum, by this elite group (Edgar-Jones 2003).

<sup>159</sup> In a recent 'performance' at East London's *Dazed and Confused* gallery an audience had their hair cut by Drill and then were featured in an exhibition of the 'artists' work.

<sup>160</sup> He has stated, "*If you look at old school barbers, its fucking wicked. My work is essentially tailored barbered haircuts with deliberate mistakes.*" He has used shears and sellotape in his work (Anderson, 1998, p. 3).

<sup>161</sup> Cox notes that historically a social problem existed in the notion of men's proximity and intimacy with female salon clientele. This was assuaged by the invention of a safer relationship; between *effeminate* hairdresser and female client, "*free from sexual misunderstanding*" (Cox, 1999, p. 94) making hairdressing arguably the only profession where heterosexual men have been willing to 'pass' as gay. At Northend, I had experienced this unusual working environment where men could be intimate with women in a de-sexualised manner in the course of working with participants.

Janey: - and with me only having fine hair I knew I couldnae get it so I just got my own kind of hair.

AP: Well, I've got very fine hair - [...] [without a pause or saying anything Michael, a trainee hairdresser, with whom I had barely exchanged greetings, takes a lock of my hair and examines it and agrees with me.]

<sup>162</sup> Cox notes that barbers aimed to compensate for the feminisation of their field by virtue of its association with women's salons and the intimacy of their practices. She calls this the 'something for the weekend aesthetic' "*to offset associations with femininity or vanity*" (Cox, 1999, p. 29). The association of 'foreignness', glamour and queered feminine excess arguably precipitated the



friends and sons are sometimes described as helpmates in women's fashioning contexts, expressing little anxiety in otherwise women-only environments. Some were active in adapting or constructing makeshift fashioning environments. Michelle's father was a former hairdresser himself and Jean remembers identifying strongly with her own father's flamboyant tastes.<sup>163</sup> Notwithstanding the punitive attitudes of some fathers to their daughters' fashioning regimes, participants' accounts suggested other roles for men have been constructed. Michelle revealed that her brother-in-law, David, was usually in the domestic space when weekend fashioning marathons took place ("*- in all rooms with mirrors*") He was described as passive and static whereas Michelle and her sister, whose fashioning/clubbing routine has not been curtailed since she married, and their friends commandeered the flat for fashioning purposes:

Michelle: Although he's Sheila's husband now, they're only just married and he [David] lives in the house and he was always there, but he was always like, you would just say, "*Do you like this outfit? Do you like that?*" or, "*Do you like-*" and just ask his opinion without really listening to it to be honest'. [Laughter]

[...]

AP: And he - is he getting fashioned at the same time?

Michelle: No. He's like trying to watch the telly and we're running round him,

Michelle's friend, Clive had a more active role in Michelle's fashioning regimes.

Michelle: He would go through the whole thing with me, I mean everything he would come up and he would say, "*Oh I like your eye colour, that's different.*" and he'd notice everything and the way I'd done my hair and he would say, "*Don't wear those shoes or they shoes*" or, "*Don't wear this don't wear -*"

AP: So where did he get his skills from in fashioning then? Do you know where - why he acquired those skills?

Michelle: I don't know whether it's just being surrounded by us so much and then being forced to listen to it no, not even - [Her mobile phone rings] I bet that's him now. [Laughter]<sup>164</sup>

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adoption by British hairdressers of French names for example, Nigel Davies to Justin de Villeneuve. The re-defining of male hairdressers as heterosexual was arguably heralded by Warren Beatty's performance in *Shampoo* (Ashby, 1975)

<sup>163</sup> Including decorative cravats and 'exotic oils'.

<sup>164</sup> But even Clive's enthusiasms were viewed as different from those of women friends. "*Guys would say you look good in anything, particularly the sort of lower, gaudier - it is, I mean, that is a bit of a generalisation. Most of the men I know aren't that savvy'd up, particularly like Clive, he - but even still, he verges on the cheap and nasty somehow, but whereas it's the women who are involved in it that know and they will tell you when you don't look good as well*". [Laughter]



Notwithstanding the changes that have been brought about through the osmotic process of feminism, noticeable in the relatively free use women can now make of domestic space and their freedom to fashion for reasons other than attracting men, participants appreciated differences in the quality of experience of inhabiting women-only spaces for specific purposes.<sup>165</sup>

Following the introduction of key themes in 'Fashioning Dusty', this chapter provides further evidence, in the form of participants' accounts of the significance of fashioning and cosmetic acts, specifically hair fashioning in constructing feminine identities, identifications and subjectivities. I analyse the ethnographic findings in relation to ideas of dissidence, pleasure, intimacies between femininities and within a context where all of the above are subject to disdain. I demonstrate how bouffanting, dyeing and other highly fashioned modifications that have been perceived as associated with working-class femininity and as paradoxically troubling and inspiring to the taste-making elites. It is apparent that women have milked pleasures from the routines, identifications and intimacies associated with fashioning in both the domestic and salon space. These identifications and intimacies in turn are associated with sororial and familial relationships that, for many have become treasured memories as well as significant ongoing fashioning regimes. Levels of disdain for such activities are identified across mainstream and feminist texts and where working-class fashioning environments and so called low-class hairdressers are routinely demonised. This theme, the demonisation and disdain of working class fashioning is emphasised in the final chapter, 'Queening It'. I also elaborate on the 'fashioning inertia' introduced in 'Fashioning Dusty' and discussed again here in relation to the 'subjugated knowledges' of hair fashioning. 'Queening It' shifts the focus from participants personal and collective memories to a broader cultural analysis of feminine excess through the most culturally freighted trope of fashioning excess, jewels, as it is discursively presented across the terrain of popular culture.

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<sup>165</sup> Ann: Women prefer to be with women I think, in my experience anyway, we tried to introduce, well we did introduce men if you like, we ran salons and clinics for men and obviously we treated men at Kingstone [burns hospital – Ann was heading up a department of cosmetic camouflage] on a regular - in fact it was often more men than women, so there'd a lot of men there, so their needs were just the same [...] their need for assistance if you like, was exactly the same as for women, but it's not as easy for them. Anyway, what we also did try was a mixed clinic with men and with women and we - it really didn't work, the women didn't like it and the men didn't like it. We tried screening off areas with men and women mixed together and they still didn't like it, and some of the women would say, "Is there a man in?" And we'd say, "Well, yes but he's in a cubicle and he's..." but they still weren't happy about it, and so actually it had to kind of be a women's clinic or a man's clinic and all the men would be fine together they would all come in and have a facial or a massage or whatever and have a jolly time and it would all be fine, even though women would be working with them, working on them, whatever, that was OK, but not to have other women clients there, and the women were the same. They didn't like having men, not really it - as OK some of them were OK but I would have said they definitely would have preferred it to be all women.



## 6 'Queening it: class, jewels and the disdained, dissident will to adorn

Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class body... It follows that the body is the most indisputable materialisation of class taste (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 190).

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the meanings of jewels and jewellery for working-class women and indicate the social, historical and cultural contexts within which their taste is expressed and interpreted.<sup>1</sup> I mark the gulf between participants' perceptions of their pleasures in and views concerning fashioning and the widespread disdain for popular tastes reflected across a spectrum of media and how specific media stars and other texts have helped shape collective tastes for dissident fashionings of femininity. I critique contemporary journalism in sustaining conservative paradigms of good and bad taste and explore the media rhetoric of naturalness, inauthenticity and demarcations of in/appropriate tastes.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter then is an attempt to explore the meanings of jewellery at moments in post-war British culture and discusses this theme in relation to broader issues of taste, class and femininity. I highlight how new and yet historically resonant forms of feminine excess were minted in Britain in the 1950s, and how, in subsequent decades, cheap and glamorous forms of ornate femininity have proliferated notwithstanding the aesthetic hegemony of Continental Modernism, the impact of feminism, and a rhetoric of disdain articulated across high and low media. Indeed, I argue that distinct audiences of women are interpellated by an expanded array of accessible forms of excess at the end of the twentieth and the start of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> In 'Fashioning Dusty' and 'Fashioning Hair' my focus was empirical data, here my aim is to contextualise participant accounts in a mosaic of media and other texts that have constructed and reflected tastes in femininity. Research participants highlighted the significance of jewellery in their fashioning regimes and early memos in the (working-class) field, in salons and at Northend College logged the widespread, almost universal use of what I have called 'working-class' or 'East End' essentially cheap, ornate jewellery by women of all ages. Their comments and jewellery fashioning at our meetings led me to new research questions. Reviewing texts on fashioning femininity I found little or no academic or feminist sources on jewellery, although this theme was a striking one in popular literature for girls. For example, comics and annuals for girls and women from the mid-1950s on illustrated an array of forms of ornate femininity. In annuals from the 1960s and 1970s, jewels, ballet costuming, the fashioning of female Royals and other forms of ornate femininity were found to be significant motifs. Pleasures in jewelled forms of feminine fantasy were evident in my own memory work, the accounts of participants (for example Elizabeth) and work by feminist academics. For example, see Walkerdine, 1997, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> I argue that media texts about working-class girls and women in this period reveal reactionary notions, of fascination and repulsion based on perceptions of gender, taste, sexuality and class. These ambivalences, indicative of bourgeois taste (makers) in relation to perceptions of working-class feminine excess mirror the Negrophilia/Negrophobia of White bourgeois Modernists outlined by Mercer (1994).



In an introductory section I discuss the appeal of glamour and ornate forms of femininity for female consumers, aspiring stars and audiences of women and challenge the notion of feminine excess as passivity. This is followed by two sections that discuss how these tastes have been interpreted.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, using the definition Royal/Vulgar Taste, I explore the further paradoxes of excess that characterise the post war phenomenon of working-class women's will to adorn and its resistance to the Modernist aesthetic hegemony.<sup>4</sup> I argue that the popularisation of Royal/Vulgar excesses occurred in part through the growth of film and media genres and through the modelling of disdained and dissident fashioning by white and Black music, film and TV stars. In an historical and cultural context where working-class women's cultures and fashioning are perennially scorned, I discuss how spectacular forms of femininity from the 1950s on represented in a range of texts and accounts reveal the extent of working-class women's identifications with forms of aristocratic excess and taste in their fantasies, consumption and fashioning of femininity.<sup>5</sup>

## 6.2 Gallus glamour and fearsome femininities

The complex individual and collective desires of women for forms of fashioned femininity remain under-researched, however, Walkerdine, Stacey, Furman and others have contributed to the process of understanding the social, historical and cultural motivations for fantasies of glamour.<sup>6</sup> For example, Walkerdine has claimed that a working-class will to adorn has impacted on and reflects aspects of twentieth century Anglo-American media and that the working-class performances of glamour therein represent "*the struggle for something better*". She contrasts this working-class desire to fashion to excess with what she interprets as the middle-class fashioning of feminism, ironically in some instances involving 'dressing up' in the garments associated with working-class men.

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<sup>3</sup> First, I examine how the rhetoric of good and bad taste has been reflected in broadsheet and feminist media texts. Widening my critique, I go on to discuss the antipathy to working-class taste reflected in the broader context of the contemporary mainstream media and address the paradoxical demonisation and appropriation of working-class women's and Black forms of fashioning and glamour by the fashion and style cognoscenti.

<sup>4</sup> I attempt to account for the perennial appeal of royal taste and aristocratic allusions in working-class cultures, noticeable in, for example, the naming of Glasgow hair salons: 'A cut above', Aristocuts, Kensington, Toffs, Top Notch, Twinset and so on.

<sup>5</sup> Illustrations are used throughout. Their purpose is twofold: to reflect directly ideas in the thesis and, more symbolically to indicate the increasing saturation of British culture with images of feminine excess in this period.

<sup>6</sup> Reflecting on the media disapprobation concerning the popular TV programme *Minipops*, a programme based on the *Stars in their Eyes* formula, where children rather than adult amateurs compete as 'soundalike' stars, Walkerdine critiques the ways that girls fantasies of glamour as expressed by *Minipops* performers are caught in the double bind of the sexualisation of girls and women's representation that simultaneously erases their agency and desire: "*In this [media journalists'] analysis there is no room for little girls to have fantasies that belong to them, as feminists in that psychoanalytic mode argued, because their fantasies are shaped entirely by the available representations: there are no fantasies that originate with girls only those projected onto them*" (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 166). Walkerdine highlights the economic and social situation of working-class girls, changing little in the post-war period "*Being looked at still presents one of the only ways in which working-class girls can escape from the routines of domestic drudgery of poorly paid work into the dubious glamour industries, so despised by feminists*" (ibid. p. 143).



# TIPS FOR TENT-PEGGERS



32. Illustrations from 'Tips for tent-peggers' in *Sunshine book for girls*, 1962, page 34.



NO ONE goes to bed early in Spain, but at fiesta time it seems as if no one goes to bed at all! The square and streets are hung with coloured lanterns and bright garlands of flowers; all night you can hear the throb of guitars and the chattering of castanets. Wild flamenco dancing and singing is going on in every wineshop, and crowds stroll in the streets as if it were midday.

When the last dance has been danced and the last song sung, when all the wine is finished and it's time to find the way home at last, there's one last thought as consolation—if you can keep awake long enough to think it: there will be another fiesta soon!

SEVILLE, the ancient capital of southern Spain, is particularly fond of fiestas. Its April fair lasts four days. A procession of cars and carriages makes its way to the central square of the city, which is taken over by hundreds of canvas booths. Mother and daughter dress in traditional style, often in gay dresses with polka-dot patterns. Fathers, husbands and brothers ride their donkeys, the harness decorated with bells for the occasion, looking very proud of the fine ladies perched behind them. The señoritas and señoras vie with each other over the magnificence of their dresses.



Extract from 'Fiesta', in *Sunshine book for girls*, 1962, page 57.



Walkerdine, Stacey, Stern and others have indicated specific blind-spots in feminist attention to and understanding of girls' motivations for fashioning excess, and, following Walkerdine and Skeggs, I suggest that some neglect has been precipitated by class tastes. Examining research participants' comments and media texts, I aim to analyse forms of femininity more usually neglected by feminist research, those constructed for and consumed by British working-class girls.

### **Ballerinas and Royals: consuming excessive costuming in British girls' annuals of the 1960s and 1970s**

In the genre of 1960s and 1970s girls annuals, the display of feminine excess was presented as a desirable, fantasy but was precariously counterpoised with advice for readers to avoid excess in their own fashioning regimes.<sup>7</sup> *The Sunshine Book for Girls* (1962) presents a typically ambivalent message. Articles such as 'Tips for Tentpeggers' and 'Be Beautiful,' endorsed a healthy, natural model of British "*beauty out of doors*", an unadorned almost ascetic non-look, policed by parents.<sup>8</sup> But these monotone images and prescriptive messages were contrasted with models of excess that suggested that girls' 'urges' for glamour might exceed such banal representations. In 'Fiesta', a full colour feature on Torremolinos, an emphasis on feminine excess was accentuated, "*...his sister is arrayed like the best Spanish ladies in a long flounced dress, set off by a comb in her hair, and coloured beads and bangles*". Fiesta "*is a time for exciting music, dancing gorgeous dresses and all possible finery. The children wear beautifully decorated dresses and the grown ups put on their most lavish costumes*" (ibid. p. 56).<sup>9</sup> 'The Story in Pictures of Princess Anne' presented her in excessively fashioned, glamorous scenarios: as bridesmaid to Princess Margaret, visiting the Trooping of the Colour and meeting Alicia Markova at the Royal Academy of Dancing. (ibid. pp76-79) An aspirational photo story 'Ballerina's Progress' traced the fantasies of a young poet/narrator/ballerina.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Walkerdine cites girls' comics as texts that have constructed and mirrored working-class readers' fantasies and desires. My analysis of girls' annuals found an abundance of similarly discursive signifiers of femininity. For example, it is apparent that during the 1960s and 1970s, girls' annuals championed and idealised feminine excess in ways linked only indirectly to fashion itself but through the fashionable retro aesthetics of Victoriana (e.g. typefaces, comic strip storylines) dance (ballet and ballroom stories, flamenco, fancy dress costuming) film costuming (with an emphasis on fantasy and historical models) and royalty. In 1963, one source stated of costume jewellery use "*Sound sense department: don't ever wear bracelets on both arms at once; don't wear rings at all until you are engaged; don't ever wear drop earrings by day*" (Green, 1963, pp. 35-41).

<sup>8</sup> "*Girls grow up quickly these days, and many feel the urge to pretty themselves with make-up during the early teens. What do parents think? Mostly they don't mind as long as the final effect is pretty, not over painted and unsuitable. How old you are when you first wear lipstick will depend on you - and your parents!*" (ibid. p. 36). Indicating that, even by 1961, British girls' fashioning was still more reserved than European and American models *Preview* annual featured a pro-lipstick article "*On with the lipstick! Says delightful French actress Nicole Maurey*". Maurey claimed, "*This 'natural' look which has been so popular over here [in Britain] - I think it is not natural at all.*". Sophia Loren and Doris Day are also imaged as part of the pro-lipstick campaign (Warman, 1961, p. 127).

<sup>9</sup> All features implied, as one stated, 'It's Fun Dressing Up'. Caricatured ethnicities (a Red Indian Squaw, a Welsh Girl ...) provided potential party outfits. The article suggested that the key to becoming a 'Mexican Peon' was to "*-borrow a pair of Mummy's gold gypsy earrings*" (ibid. p. 85-88).

<sup>10</sup> "*To be a ballerina / Nobody could be keener than me [...] You see/ I don't wear a tinsel dress - / [...] And though you wouldn't know/ One day my name will glow/ In lights [...] Now here's the substance of our dreams/ The goal of all our youthful*





33. The first Royal pantomime, Princess Elizabeth as Prince Florizel and Princess Margaret as Cinderella, page 64, *The Little Princesses*, Marion Crawford, 1950.



Ballet was the pre-eminent theme across the genre but occasional articles highlighted the excesses of dance costuming in other territories. In 'Look at me I'm dancing' in the *Girl Film and TV* annual (1962) the writer reviewed the TV ballroom dancing phenomenon *Come Dancing* emphasising the otherness of the spectacle (Frank, 1962, pp. 21- 24). "*They seem to move in the rarefied air of some dream world remote from the everyday business of workaday life – as exotic as beautiful fish in an aquarium*" (ibid.).<sup>11</sup>

Articles, or more precisely illustrations of fairytale and real Royals featured prominently in girls' annuals from the 1950s, indeed many titles are specifically dedicated to them.<sup>12</sup> Film and TV annuals began to fashion the Queen as a star in annuals leading up to and following the Coronation.<sup>13</sup> In some instances, annuals presented spectacles of doubly ornate costuming: Cinderella interpreted through ballet, ballroom dancers in flamenco mode, the royal princesses attending weddings or performing in their annual Christmas pantomime.<sup>14</sup> Typically the effect was 'glittering', 'spectacular' or 'lavish'.<sup>15</sup>

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*schemes/ To dance the parts that brought great fame/ To many a glittering ballet name*" (ibid. p. 58). Although not a dedicated 'Ballet Book' the annual included further features on this theme '[Ballet] Stars at work', '[Ballet] First Night', 'Where do ballets come from?' (ibid. pp. 92-93) and a 'Gallery of Ballet Stars' (ibid. pp. 106-107). Emphasising the point that these were fantasies, one feature stated: "*Ballet owes a lot to people who dream, for dreams are the stuff that ballet is made of. Not just the important dreams composers dream, but all the little dreams as well... the dreams maybe a youngster dreams as she sits at the never-ending task of darning the toes of her 'points'. Dreams she dreams when she tries on her very first costume for her very first performance before an audience*" (ibid. p. 92). Some regular comic books for girls, for example *Princess Tina* published annuals with ballet as a central theme. *Ballet Book* no. 7 (undated but early 1970s) contained little text but full page saturated colour illustrations of dancers, and lavish costumes including 'exotic' (and arguably erotic) features including, 'Russian' dancing, 'A strange Spanish story', 'Talent from Trinidad' and 'French dancers- modern style.'

<sup>11</sup> In 1960 *The Guardian*'s Mary Crozier had reviewed it from a similarly remote perspective: "*On the BBC after Panorama I saw part of Come Dancing a pursuit which as seen in this programme might well be examined as a fascinating line in anthropology. These ballroom championships (this was at the National Ballroom Queen contest) let us in on a complete, remote world with its customs, costumes, rituals and honours. The crowning of the Queen who sinks billowing in masses of fluffy skirt into a throne-like chair and is solemnly crowned with a glittering coronet is like a super-pantomime erupting into real life*" (Crozier, 1960). *Come Dancing* is the BBC's longest running programme.

<sup>12</sup> Even Helen Shapiro's first eponymous annual had as a lead feature, 'The Travelling Princess' (Alexandra).

<sup>13</sup> For example, the *Girl Film and Television* 1959, contained articles about the filming of the Coronation and the Royal Ballet.

<sup>14</sup> This is detailed and illustrated in, *The Little Princesses*, by former Royal nanny, Marion Crawford. In the first Royal pantomime Princess Elizabeth dressed as 'Prince Florizel', Princess Margaret as 'Cinderella' (Crawford, 1950, p. 65).

<sup>15</sup> Memory work texts, participants' accounts and the academically execrable often ghosted auto/biographies of stars suggest a map of collective fantasies of excess reflecting themes of fairytale royalty, glittering costuming and jewels. At intervals in this chapter, I discuss Julie Goodyear and the character 'Bet Lynch' as models of gallus, fearsome femininity. In her biography of Goodyear, *Queen of the Street*, Beck charted her early fascination with fairytale excesses. As a young girl she would be "*allowed her to pull out the drawer in her bedroom and root through its contents. It was full of interesting bits and pieces she could play with, and she spent hours creating a rich and colourful kingdom. [...] aged 5, [...] Julie's favourite daydream centred on a pile of coloured buttons she kept crammed in a jar. Picking up each one, she pretended they were diamonds, pearls and emeralds, and she would lie on the floor making up stories about princes and princesses wearing the jewels*" (Beck, 1995, p. 4). Such romanticised hagiographies, nevertheless bear resemblance to memory work texts "*A had collected and swapped beads and 'pearls' and 'diamonds' at infants' school. Swapping beads was a long-term dinnertime activity amongst a few of the girls. It was wonderful to possess as she had, big, pearlised beads like balls salvaged from female relative's broken necklaces and rarest and most valued of all a handful of crystal and diamante. Reviewing celebrity jeweller Kenneth Jay Lane's work (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) McFadden claimed that here was "everything to turn a woman magically into Cinderella for the night". Lane said of his work "They are a diversion. They make you happy. That's what jewels are for*" (Becker, 2001, p. 13).



## Romford brides, soap weddings and fairytale princesses: feminine excesses in popular media

Girls' literature and popular media directed at audiences of women in the post-war period charted and/or constructed a growing fascination with the spectacle of feminine excess, despite the simultaneous proscriptions against the decorative and the detail inherent in Modernism and feminism. The approximate decade from the early 1950s to early 1960s presented an opportunity, however fraught with social constrictions, for women to indulge in or fantasise about excessive fashioning. But the rhetoric of naturalness, a default standard for British women in the post-war period, reasserted itself in an expanded array of Modernist influenced forms.<sup>16</sup> The so-called traditional wedding increasingly offered, at least for some with means, an ambivalently sanctioned focal point for both individual and collective fantasies of feminine excess. Such fantasies were literally and vicariously consumed, against rising levels of critical and political scorn for brides.<sup>17</sup> Ann noted how disdain for bridal excesses, was in evidence in 1940s when her own mother's desire for "*all the trimmings*" was perceived as a form of vanity.

I always remember my mum saying how my dad's mother [from a monied background] was horrified that she was having a big white wedding with all the trimmings and she came from up a close in Govan, and she thought that was ridiculous that somebody from that background - and a lot of her family wouldn't come to it because they obviously looked down their nose you know, on my mum's side of the family.<sup>18</sup>

As the stigma of divorce diminished and its availability increased, particular female stars can be seen to provide models of serial weddings spectacles through the lens of British film, TV, and so-called gossip media.<sup>19</sup> In such representations, fashioning, jewels, fantasy and excess are fore-

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<sup>16</sup> Beat and Mod existentialism, tousled Bardot-esque hippy chic, lesbian and/or feminist, Boden devotees (Turner, 2003) and utility chic etc.

<sup>17</sup> In this brides are viewed as submissive, duped by marriage but also directive and wholly responsible for the excess of the event. Grooms are often caricatured as long-suffering, reluctant and passive in the process.

<sup>18</sup> Janey's wedding in 1959 produced an iconic memory of incomparable glamour of modelling an elaborate, home made gown. Her dancing and ice-skating commitments also provided Janey with opportunities for extravagances in dressmaking, including the use of sumptuous, unfunctional fabrics. She omitted to describe her bridegroom's appearance. My memory text of being a bridesmaid, had a distinct iconic vividness since, inevitably, family photographs recorded the event. I remembered the bride but not the bridegroom's appearance.

It is impossible to extricate the desire for fantasy costuming from the hopes for a fairytale future, however, some participants, including Ettie, used this idea metaphorically in evaluating her relationship: "*I have to give back to God what he has given to me, he's given me six children, the ability to feed them, Jimmy and I, a marriage that lasted, there was no smooth running marriage, it was hard going to make it work, we had - I won't go into that, but it wasn't a fairy tale marriage of Prince Charming and Cinderella, maybe a - but we made it work*". Gabrielle used the metaphor of jewels to describe her own long-term partnership with Ralph: "*People that are quite well off they wear diamonds, real diamonds. I mean, well, such as me I don't think I've got a diamond, only Ralph*".

<sup>19</sup> Marriage collapse and divorce, an increasingly widespread social phenomena in the post-war decades, can be seen as in inverse proportion to the scope for bridal excesses performed in social and media representations. Most weddings have become a media event of sorts given the development of video and photographic technology.





34. Elizabeth Taylor and Larry Fortensky, uncredited photograph, in *Elizabeth Taylor, the illustrated biography*, 1999, James Christopher, page 57.



grounded, providing pleasures for many female audiences increasingly disabused of and/or indifferent to claims of lifelong fidelity.

### Stars, soaps and gossip: fashioning wedding excess

Elizabeth Taylor is a model for excess on a range of registers for female audiences, consumers, readers and fans in the post-war period. In later passages I discuss Taylor as a model of Royal/Vulgar excess, an astute manager of popular cultural forms and as the pre-eminent figure associated with usurping the Royal prerogative to stage displays of jewels. Elizabeth Taylor's excesses were tirelessly charted in girls' and film annuals for at least two decades from the 1950s. Her personal and film costumes represented (mock historical) expressions of excess. Her tastes were increasingly pilloried in criticism but she remained popular with audiences and consumers throughout this period; providing both a beacon of unabashed feminine excess in her film roles, fashionings serial marriages and synonymy with 'glittering tokens'.<sup>20</sup>

Sartorially and matrimonially, Taylor appeared to sanction to audiences of women levels of self-conscious pleasures in excess and fantasies of femininity, notwithstanding scathing media criticism.<sup>21</sup>

In Taylor's wake, Pat Phoenix and Julie Goodyear, two germinal British soap stars who created iconic characters by embracing the mantle of excessive femininity, had refused conventional expectations of matrimony whilst apparently delighting in the glamorous fashioning marriages

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<sup>20</sup> Her first marriage in 1950, to Nicky Hilton, heir of the hotel empire, lasting two weeks according to Taylor, was "a fairytale match of business wealth and Hollywood glamour" (Christopher, 1999, p. 37). Her most recent, her seventh in 1991 to construction worker Larry Fortensky held at Michael Jackson's Neverland Estate at Rancho Mirage, California received "the biggest blast of publicity since Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer [doing] no harm at all to sales of her latest perfume 'White Diamonds'" (ibid. p. 150).

Her first wedding dress was the epitome of New Look romanticism in white satin with tiara and voluminous net veil, the last was more flamboyant, an eccentric beribboned milkmaid's costume with sprigs of appliquéd roses, puffed sleeves and a large pink bow at the waist, totally at odds with contemporary designer fashion, the garments' excesses competing with ostentatious jewellery. On both occasions, some forty years apart, the bride wore her trademark Cleopatra eye make-up.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman is an exception, having noted "Her multiple marriages, instead of looking like proof of emotional instability, at first seemed more the actions of a woman who was having a damn good time, and couldn't care less what the very conservative MGM publicity department (or Debbie Reynolds for that matter, whose husband, Eddie Fisher she scandalously stole) thought of it all" (Freeman, 2003, p. 8).

Commentators have suggested that Taylor's excesses fuelled the construction of a new genre of media representations of femininity in the 1980s, the soap opera wedding, against the modernist and feminist grain of realism and anti-romanticism. Rabinovitz notes that from the 1950s to the 1970s US television weddings were 'simple affairs': "The wedding ceremony, itself set in familiar surroundings that were not separate from other narrative lines, functioned as both closure and crisis in ongoing plot developments. Before the 1980s, there was little fanfare prefiguring the wedding and no advance publicity outside the serials to encourage viewer curiosity about the wedding and its meanings [...] Although the weddings became 'bigger' events throughout the 1970s, it was Luke and Laura's wedding on *General Hospital* in *Sweeps Week* of November 1981 – the early years of the Reagan era and the season succeeding Prince Charles and Lady Di's media saturated wedding – that shifted the representation and function of soap opera weddings. [...] With a large crew on location at a replica of a Norman French chateau, [...] producers went all out to stage an extravagant fantasy wedding, complete with movie star Elizabeth Taylor in attendance as a mysterious wedding guest" (Rabinovitz 1992 p. 279). Taylor's playful, unconsciously post-modern use of soap opera genre is evidenced in her promotion of her fragrance 'Black Pearl'. She appeared in a string of her favourite soaps – *The Nanny*, *Can't Hurry Love*, *Murphy Brown* and *High Society* – "as a deranged cameo of herself, looking for a mysterious gem she had pretended to have lost on location. It was an ingenious piece of advertising" (Christopher, 1999, p. 154).



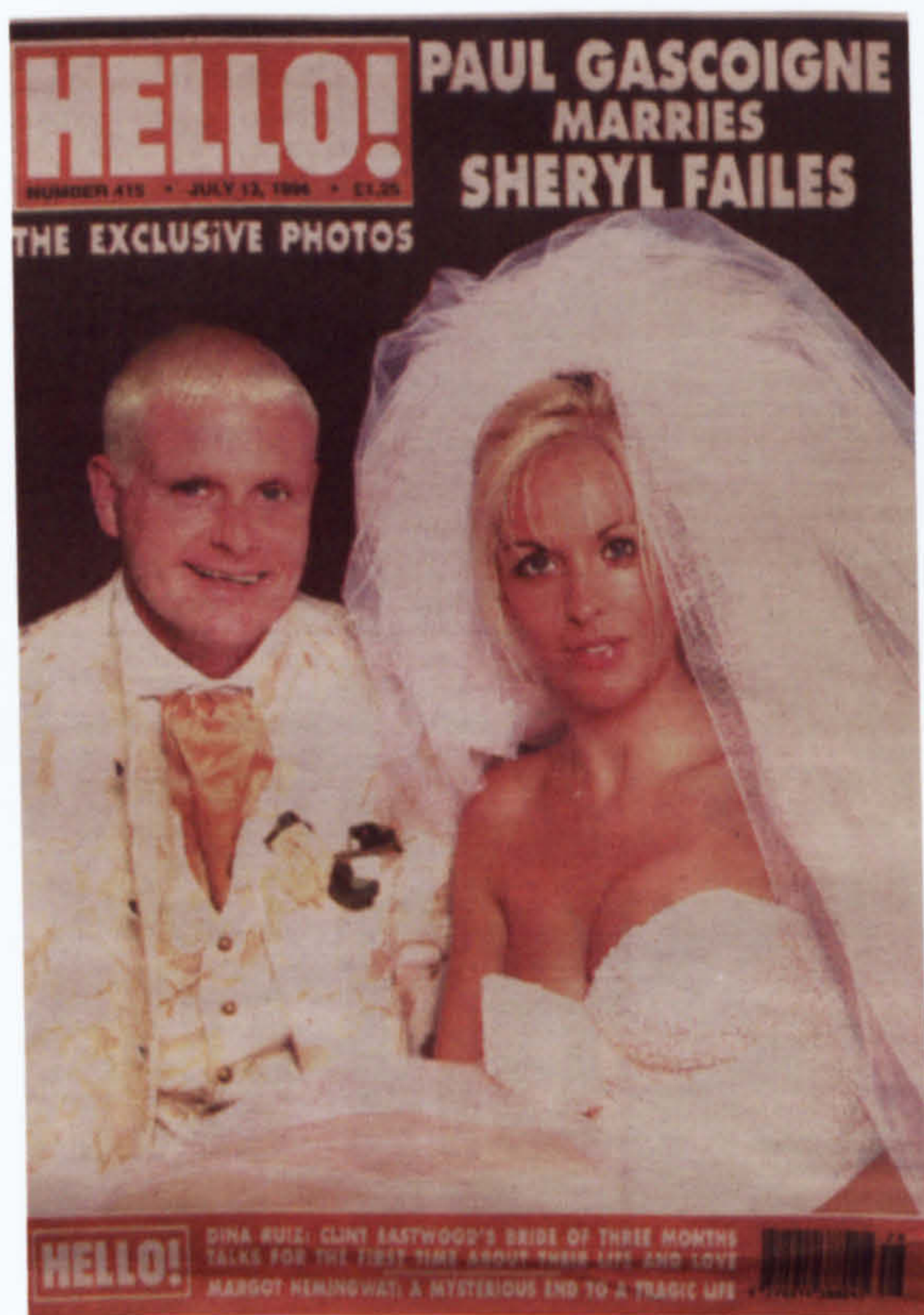


35. Julie Goodyear after her marriage to Tony Rudman at Bury Parish church, 1973, in *Queen of the Street*, Sally Beck, 1995, unpaginated.



One of 'Bet Lynch''s marriages, to 'Alec Gilroy' photograph in *Coronation Street, the inside story*, Bill Podmore and Peter Reece, 1990, unpaginated.





36. Cover, *Hello!*, July 13, 1996, Issue 415



Beckhams marriage, *OK!*, 30 July, 1999, Issue 172, page 59.



The Beckhams at Luttrell Castle, *OK!*, 16 July, 1999, Issue 171, page 48



Beckhams enthroned at their marriage reception, in *OK!*, 16 July, 1999, Issue 170, page 88.



afforded. In 1973, arriving for her second marriage in an “*ostentatious gold gown*”, three years after joining *Coronation Street* as ‘Bet Lynch’ Goodyear staged a ‘flashy’ wedding at Bury Parish Church. Goodyear’s identification with aristocratic and Hollywood precedents was thinly veiled.<sup>22</sup>

The popularity of soaps and gossip magazines from the late 1980s grew tangentially with representations of the spectacle of (apparently) real and fantasy weddings to the extent that they became a principal selling point.<sup>23</sup>

In response to the proliferation of industries connected to weddings *Independent* journalist Louise Levene’s indictment reads as a critique of the vanity of *Northern* brides.

The bride first selects The Dress, usually a large white lampshade more suited to an amateur revival of the King and I than a register office in Hartlepool. Having made the big decision about the ‘attire’ (a word now exclusive to bride speak) she will then shop for a panoply of tat, the vulgarity of which is exceeded only by its expense – small net bags containing five sugared almonds (£1.50) and commemorative garters which can be colour coordinated with the ‘theme’ of your wedding (£16.95) [...] Vanity is everywhere... (Levene, 1996, p. 4).

Such critiques of consumption failed to acknowledge the collective, pleasurable investment for many women for whom the wedding ceremony was a longed for performance of ultra femininity. The iconic memories of participants were frequently linked to notions of fairytale princesses, the adulation of an audience, and dramatic transformation. An absorption in wedding attire, disdained in Levene’s article, may indeed centre on the pleasures of specific often banal objects possessing extra-ordinary haptic or visual qualities. Such objects can be the focus for real pleasures as Sandy suggests:

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<sup>22</sup> “Julie arrived at the church in an open topped vintage car, a 1920 Vauxhall. The men of the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment, who had adopted her as a pin-up, formed a guard of honour on the church steps with rifles and fixed bayonets... at one stage a Saracen tank came into view, Julie was staggered, she said, ‘I’ve made hundreds of public appearances but I’ve never seen anything like that crowd. You could have forgiven us for thinking it was a royal wedding’” (Goodyear in Beck, 1995, p. 109). The identifications between royal ceremonies and ‘bridal fantasies’ are alluded to Kuhn’s account of the Coronation, the post war apotheosis of Royal spectacle buoyed by public patriotism (Kuhn, 1995, p. 69). The Coronation provided a prototype of excess emulated and ‘vulgarised’, in national street parties where the Coronation was re-enacted and, subsequently wedding ceremonies where ‘ladies in waiting’, the elaborate white gown, train, and symbolic jewellery were deployed.

<sup>23</sup> “In 1981 more people tuned in to Ken and Deirdre’s wedding on Coronation Street than they did for Charles and Lady Di.” (Bonner 1995 p. 4-5). The (real) celebrity wedding as cover story crystallised in the marriage of ‘Gazza and Shazza’ and reached an apotheosis over three issues with the fairytale/Royal wedding of ‘Posh and Becks’ Issues 170, 171 and 172 of *OK!* magazine (July, 1999) focussed on the Beckhams’ ‘Secret Chapel Wedding Service’, the Post-wedding costuming, and ‘coverage of ‘The Wildest Wedding Party Ever!’ respectively. Paul and Cheryl Gasgoine were married in a similarly flamboyantly fairytale manner with both bride and groom dyed blonde and wearing white (*Hello!* 13 July, 1996) Both events marked new heights in media representations of feminine excess, presumptuous appropriations of aristocratic taste and an absorbing engagement for both stars and readers in sentiment and nostalgia and the possibilities of an ornate fantasy wedding habitus. I am grateful to Simon Frith for drawing my attention to the vogue for celebrity remarriages – a further rite to legitimate excess, promote celebrities and sell magazines. The Scottish wedding magazine, *I Do!* profiled former Wet Wet Wet star Tommy Cunningham who renews his wedding vows at a ceremony every 5 years (Patience, 1998).



Sandy: I can remember having - and again from my Aunty as a present, some patent leather shoes that were pointed at the front you know, and they were just beautiful, and I was so – oh, these shoes, I mean, you know, the way I cared for them, and I remember putting Vaseline on these shoes to make them even more shiny and cleaned them with - and everything, and they were just gorgeous, we certainly had those sort of like Princess, you know, Cinderella slippers or whatever they were, with the high heels, we had those, you know, but the first proper pair of shoes that I can remember that were anything about fashion you know, that weren't tough girls shoes and that - and we wouldn't have got them at home, but my Aunty bought these patent leather pointed shoes and the strap on them was a chain, it was a gold chain across there [gestures to front of foot] yeah, and they were so gorgeous, yeah.

### **Glamour: 'spangly', 'glittery' and 'solid gold'**

Research memo: After we left the café, Ettie's final words to me, by way of goodbye were, 'You know we are both twinklers'.

I used to love fairy stories, fairy tales [...] I used to just live in them. And I was so impressed by jewellery. Back then, I thought anyone who had a clean house was rich. Anything that glittered, glistened, I thought one day I'd have that too... [...] looking fancy was one way to fill up the days, and dreamin' was another. I kind of lived in a fairy tale. I was Cinderella or a princess. I wanted folks to be happy to see me comin' and to remember me when I walked away... [...] I dreamed of the time that I'd have money and I'd be rich, and I would have pretty clothes and make-up and jewellery and cars and houses – big cars and houses. And I dreamed of singin' and I dreamed of being famous and loved. It was like a fantasy life. I thought about being a king or a queen and just likin' people and having everyone likin' me (Dolly Parton cited in Berman, Grosset and Dunlap, 1977, pp. 18-19).

Her dress embroidered and sparkling with beads, pearls, silver, gold and diamante, the queen may wear the Garter sash or an order of the country she is visiting, invariably wears long white gloves, and is ablaze with magnificent jewels (*The Queen's Clothes*, Robb, 1997, p. 65).

Garments, cosmetics and hair that expressed a flamboyant glamour appealed to many participants, for others, sequins and spangles, diamante and leopard skin were read as excessive or inappropriate, in line with high and low media disdain.<sup>24</sup> Many objects remembered with joy from childhood fused glamorous or rare (representations of) textures, costumes or finishes with lush musical

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Ann noted that 'spangly' makeup was inappropriate for older women. Ellen found the shiny suits of Motown male artists excessive.



experiences. For example, a 1960s silver album cover, a finish both unusual and glamorous, made an impression on Jean: *"The first Motown album I bought was a silver cover and oh, I can't describe the design, it was silver but it had shades of silver going through it with all the names of the you know, the singles on it, small you know, [...] the designs on the cover were lovely"*. And sparkly and slinky glamorous excess was an evocative aspect of Shirley Bassey's appeal for Gabrielle: *"I liked the way she used to sing, the way she used to wave her arms about, the way she dressed and lovely, long, slinky dresses and I thought she had a beautiful face [...] and her eyes, her eyes sort of lit up and sparkled..."*<sup>25</sup>

Bassey's costumes and aura evoke Hollywood star precedents. In their examination of the tastes of female audiences for movie stars of the 1930s and 1940s, Herzog and Gaines noted the appeal of costumier Adrian's *"artistic flamboyance"* for stars and filmgoers alike, significantly, his use of detail, decoration and otherworldly fabrics, for *"unconventional effect"*.<sup>26</sup> In their wake, British music, film and TV stars like Bassey, Phoenix and Dors constructed a glamorous aura using costumes freighted with signification and pleasure for female audiences.<sup>27</sup>

The rhetoric and appeal of jewels and jewellery is extended across the spectrum of cosmetic acts and found in the most modest fashioning contexts. Maureen had found a creative partner, a hairdressing student at Northend, who enabled her to achieve a glamorous look and 'unconventional effects' in hair colouring.

<sup>25</sup> In a review of a performance in 2003 Simpson noted that Bassey wore *"waterfalls of diamonds"*. After an encore she departed, *"to another flurry of gifts including, bizarrely, a huge diamond ring"* (Simpson, 2003, p. 28). Elizabeth, in a post-interview comment stated that any sparkly or out of the ordinary fabrics were a delight to her, growing up as she did in post-war austerity. There is little scope in this thesis to make connections with international female performers who express to excess, however, Steward's obituary of the Mexican singer Lola Beltrán who died in 1996 hints at the more widespread appeal for performances by those embodying so-called rags to riches triumph of ornate fashioning, glittering jewels vocal and gestural drama: *"La Grande [...] would be decked out in a frilled dress, jewelled, flashing gorgeous rings, and pulling the trademark shawl across her shoulders. Then, in exaggerated despair, backed by a vast mariachi band she would slip from confidentiality and barely-sung whispers into long dramatically held notes, her voice suffused with tears. Her signature tune Cu curru cu cu paloma is an extraordinary example of her skill, complete with an imitation of a dove's cooing"* (Steward, 1996, p. 11).

<sup>26</sup> *"Women would know, for instance, that one of Adrian's trademarks was 'emphasis above the table' – detail which was made especially interesting around the neck with tucks, flaps, inserts, beading or unusually shaped collars. Adrian's work was also characterised by lavish use of expensive materials such as lamé, chiffon, crepe, taffeta, stain, voile, fur sequins and bugle beads. He might, for an unconventional effect, use expensive fabric in a rather functional item, as seen in Crawford's memorable lame polo coat"* (Herzog and Gaines, 1991, p. 81).

<sup>27</sup> For example, Bassey's *"Diamond Dress, encrusted with Swarovski crystals and trimmed with lilac ostrich feathers [with] its matching floor length cape, made entirely of tiered purple ostrich feathers [and] the gold and silver sequinned and beaded gown, forever associated with her theme song for Goldfinger"* (Barton, 2003). Bassey claims: *"I still have my first gown from when I was eighteen years old. Doug Darnell made that one for me. It was sexy, and it was heavy because it was all diamante"* (Bassey 1998, p. 187). She records an alternative account in SAGA magazine: *"Michael Sullivan, the man who discovered her singing in a theatre in Jersey, was married to a woman who made Shirley her first stage outfit. 'It was black and it had mink round the bust. As soon as I put it on, I burst into tears. I was too young to wear black. So she made me one in white'"* (Bassey cited in Barber, 2003, p. 60). The significance of the long skirt or gown in signalling evening glamour was attested to by participants including Jenny whose dressing up regime included *"my make-up, my lipstick [Laughter] and my long skirts"*. In choosing long skirts and dresses, some participants seemed to be identifying with the tradition of stars like Bassey who have patronised stage rather than fashion designers, eschewing fashion for glamour. Unequivocally signalling that dressing up was one of her real pleasures, when asked if she wore jewellery when going out Jenny stated *"Oh yes aha, I've got that many earrings I don't know which ones to put on!"* [Laughter]



Maureen: Red isn't it? [to the hairdresser] On the front of it. It's a gold is it? It's a red and a gold aye, so I think that might – we're hoping that will match the front.

AP: Oh I'm sure it will.

Cheryl: The gold one with the red at the front [showing me the sample hair cards] and she's got a mixture of both one after the other. [...] And it'll be solid at the front, solid gold.<sup>28</sup>

### Staging visions of excess

In some early post war Royal annuals the relationship of identification between readers and Royals bears striking similarities in the star performance and audience pleasures in consumption. One annual recording the Royal tour of 1954 inferred that the star did not disappoint,

The most rigorous guard was kept over [the Queen's jewels as they travelled with her] and the care expended in selecting and guarding them was amply repaid by the evident delight of the women of the Commonwealth when they saw her majesty dressed as they had always imagined her to be- resplendent and regal in her magnificent jewels (Talbot and Vaughn Thomas [undated but probably 1954] p. 92).

Techniques of awe-inspiring fashioning deployed by the Royals have been appropriated for star purposes and vice versa. But the impact of glamorous and excessive fashioning in stage performances, is routinely read, even in contemporary accounts as uniquely *American*.<sup>29</sup>

Memory work texts and participant accounts' problematised a reductive reading of women who fashion to excess as representing powerless objects for patriarchy, and specific female soap, music and film stars demonstrate that feminine excess may be deployed un/wittingly to create a powerful, wilful or fearsome effect. Contributing a moment of insight for this research, Maureen made the following comment about her earrings:

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<sup>28</sup> In Gimlin's research, middle-class professional women salon-goers identified "bronzy" i.e. artificial hair as the most despised along with "big", "flashy", "frilly" and styles with "too much pomp" all signified "tacky", "low class" tastes (Gimlin, 1996, pp. 519-520).

<sup>29</sup> As illustrated in this interpretation of Parton's live performance "British retinas struggle to contain the shimmering, rhinestone-clad vision of joy that has just arrived onstage. [...] Five foot three in heels; petite and yet from so many angles teetering undisappointingly enormous" (McDaid, 2002, p. 12). Such excesses have generated strong emotions in British audiences. Through the agency of camp appropriation and a queering of feminine excess even Ellen, who otherwise sought to distance herself from 'sappy' femininity, could register her appreciation of Parton's 'glitz' and 'gloss'. "Dolly. I just thought Dolly was just so up-front if you'll excuse the expression [Laughter] you know, she was just so blumming larger than life and what you see is what you get, and you know, she has this Dollywood place. I have this really big thing about kitsch, I just love like glitzy, glossy, kitschy things and I think Dolly is the human epitome of kitsch".



I wear big, they are like big, gallus things with - big, big ones all coming down, so my ma, she got me a new pair for Christmas and they are - all light up.[...] Soon as the dark comes on and it lights it up.[...] Aye, they light up, all different colours, I wear them when we're going somewhere special and I put them in and I feel quite good, but see, with the likes of when it's dark, so they put out all the lights and they all light up.

Maureen's use of the word 'gallus' is instructive.<sup>30</sup> The term, chosen with pride to identifying her own fashioning, seemed apposite to describe other women who fashioned to excess; for example, Goodyear's wearing of large earrings, "*which sported photographs of the Prince and Princess of Wales*" when meeting the Queen as she, the Queen, opened the new *Coronation Street* set in 1982, provoking an unpublished comment by Her Majesty (Little, 1993, p. 122)<sup>31</sup>. But this gallus behaviour is characteristically subordinated, as in Irvine's notion of working-class female passive dupes eclipsed by a more knowing audience of gay men.

And who are we? *Coronation Street's* audience is susceptible to being stereotyped as chip butty eating northern lasses chained to the ironing board. But Bet Lynch is a gay icon as much as a housewife's heroine. Of course there are the outrageous clothes. Bet dresses like a drag queen and drag queens have often returned the compliment. But it is her diva qualities in the face of tragedy that make her a gay heroine in the mould of Judy Garland (Irvine, 1995, p. 17)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The terms used in media texts and some participants accounts to describe women who fashion to excess revealed misogynistic, and classist tendencies, for example, 'bimbo', 'slag', 'tarty', 'pikey', 'over the top', 'porno', 'taken too far', 'trashy', 'flashy', 'brassy' and 'cheap' etc.

I had been introduced to the term gallus in my first weeks living in Glasgow. I heard it used in relation to a woman who I had read as embodying the ineffable traits of feminine excess that are now focus of this research. I subsequently mis-used this term over the next 20 years. Locating the definition of the term, I found that gallus did not mean, as I had thought, a big, beautiful, life-loving, expressive and dramatically adorned woman but a "*bold, daring, rash, wild, unmanageable, impish, mischievous, cheeky*" person. (<http://www.scots-online.org/dictionary/search.asp>).

<sup>31</sup> 'Gallus' might also describe Taylor's hauteur on outglitzing Princess Margaret, or participant Jane's spectacular 'Bitch' pendant. I would argue that gallusness is a characteristic recognised and appreciated by at least Scots female audiences in Phoenix, Bassey, Dors and others.

<sup>32</sup> Low and high media increasingly link the characterisations of feminine excess in soaps with camp and queer culture and real/imagined gay community. Smith claims: "*Soap opera whether it is big hair and shoulder pads or hairnets and hotpots, has always had a special appeal to gay audiences*" (Smith, 2003, p. 24). Nouveau-Crossroads producer Yvon Grace attempted to engineer a camp appeal "*I'm aiming for the gay audience [...] we've completely revamped it to make it camp, witty and glamorous. It's full of sex, with lots of smouldering, plenty of heaving bosoms, great hair, perfect nails. And at the top of the pyramid we have Jane Asher as a bitch goddess in a designer frock*" (Grace cited in Smith, *ibid.*). However, such identifications should be understood in the broader media context of camp hegemony. For example, gay icons identified in a recent article includes Nikki Sanderson ('Candice' in *Coronation Street*), "*The Wombles, Jude Law, Anne Robinson, Tinky Winky, Micheal Portillo and Vinnie Jones*" (Wilson, 2000, p. 17). Goodyear has somewhat unconvincingly attempted to demonstrate a postmodern, camp sensibility post-*Coronation Street*. Lynda Murdin, writing for the *Yorkshire Post* was happy to take the bait in her article promoting Goodyear's stint in the musical *La Cage Aux Folles* touring Yorkshire theatres. 'A Happy Goodyear – former soap-star Julie Goodyear has reinvented herself as a gay icon' (Murdin, 2002, p. 7).

Soaps as camp and women as drag queens have been adopted by academic researchers. In her thesis *High heels and hoovering: femininity in 1990s culture*, Janine Liladhar, argues that femininity in soap opera has been defined by theorists in association with domesticity, family life and other interpersonal relationships "*However I argue that the inclusion of the soap queen in the programmes complicates this notion. Drawing on Queer Theory I suggest that the soap queen, with her resemblance to the drag queen, offers a performance of gender*" <http://www.shu.ac.uk/schools/cs/english/research/wsres/homepage.html>, 08/06/02.



Birch's memorialising of 'Bet Lynch' comes closer to linking the character's gallus fashioning appeal for audiences of *women*, and an understanding of the term as connoting defiant, female street savvy.<sup>33</sup>

"So after 25 years as the nation's favourite barmaid, you've pulled your last pint, had your last 'Bet Lynch breakfast' (a cup of tea and a fag – with a cigarette holder, of course) taken your stupendous cleavage (Newton on the left, Ridley on the right) and tottered off, beehive and false eyelashes stiff and proud, to the netherworld of chat shows and panto known as life after soap. Bet Lynch stars as Widow Twanky on Blackpool pier – I can see it now. If the stiletto fits, wear it. You brought the Street something else too, a defiant glamour that countless others from Lily Savage to Margi Clarke have tried to imitate. You were the back-street diva who knew that a bit of slap, a slash of lippy and a barbed quip could help staunch the deepest wound. Get the Polyfilla and CFCs out girl, as you so memorably advised Raquel when she fell apart after being cheated in love. You sounded wise in your role of matriarch precisely because you spoke from experience. Your earrings and leopard skin were inspirational; your way of handling a crisis, pragmatism itself" (Birch, 1995, p. 3).

Birch's interpretations, that women who fashion to excess, of which 'Bet Lynch' is an exaggerated but recognisable characterisation, are aware of artifice rather than labouring under false consciousness about the deceit of making up.<sup>34</sup> 'Bet Lynch's' gallus femininity is indubitably a masquerade, understood as such by character, actor and audiences, but this masquerade does not (merely) collapse into camp irony; this is an awareness of irony and artifice, but not a performance that barely conceals disdain. For female audiences well aware of the perils and rewards of fashioning 'slap', 'Bet Lynch' demonstrated *in extremis* an ironic pragmatism in the face of the reality of endlessly repeated cosmetic acts.<sup>35</sup>

Far from fixing and containing sexuality and restricting selfhood, knowledge and awareness of the mechanisms and pleasures of artifice, figures such as Dors and Phoenix, gave rise to fearsome, and

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<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the inevitable allusion to Goodyear as a transvestite man/pantomime dame.

<sup>34</sup> It endorses Stern's view that women who "*traverse the narrative every day that they remove their make-up*", are not unaware of, "*the fact of the continual renewal of the masquerade effort*" (Stern, 1997, p. 192).

<sup>35</sup> In *The Language of Coronation Street* Miller and Nown define Slap as "*Makeup, cosmetics: As Bet Lynch says 'Get your slap on, and we'll go out on the razzle'*". The term is hardly indicative of subtle dissembling and self-deceit. They traced its etymology from theatrical slang, probably from slapping on make-up "*Face' is an alternative expression: as she was driven away by ambulance from the Rovers fire, Bet, barely conscious asked: 'Can you hang on while I put my face on?'*" (ibid. p. 79). In her history of the Tiller Girls, Vernon noted the 'crime' of matter (slap) out of place "*The face make-up was known as 'fleshing'; it was then a natural colour, not the tan that became popular later on. The white dusting powder over the fleshing was sometimes cornflower. Every evening the make-up would be wiped off with a towel... The biggest crime of all [in the first decade of the nineteenth century] was to go round to the front of the house or into the street in 'full slap'*" (Vernon, 1988, p. 38).



gallus performances that confounded rather than confirmed notions of British femininity in the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>36</sup>

### Rules of adornment: policing gallus femininities

A dissident will to adorn is a cultural trait, a subjugated knowledge amongst girls and young women in the post-war period. This is evident in subcultural fashioning trends, mimetic identifications with stars, memory work testimonies, recorded in academic and popular literature and participants' accounts. It has necessitated parental and more broadly, social and cultural regulations and restrictions evidenced in advice metered out in girls and women's magazines, books, annuals, school rules and other texts.<sup>37</sup> Accounts of dissident and disdained fashioning episodes at school such as those gathered by Christine Griffin and discussed by Ettie in relation to her own and her daughter's fashioning, is arguably present in most state school and college settings; suggesting use of cosmetics acts and jewellery by young women is anti-institutional and beyond control.<sup>38</sup> Ellen raised the notion of inappropriate fashioning in her observations on a mutual colleague.

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<sup>36</sup> According to Lusted, Diana Dors: "Established initially as a sex symbol, she refused the connotations of dumb sexuality. Always self-conscious of the type, she wasted few chances to expose – through exaggerated gestures of female sexuality and a disdain for on screen predatory males (no-one curled a lip like Dors) – its construction of male voyeurism. Yet skilfully, the license of her own sexuality was not lost in the process and the sense of woman in control, manipulating within the constraints, was paramount. As she aged she pushed at the connotations of a variant type known as 'the good time girl' retaining its characteristic self-regulating search for pleasure, but denying its characterisation as sin... Her challenge to these conventions (e.g. her risqué performances on chat shows etc.) made her a risk to the institution, hence the short term irregularity of her appearances, but this merely served to imbue her appearances with critical resonance. Dors offered a challenging model in antagonistic relation to the meaning of roles customarily allocated to (especially working-class) women and it is likely that the model would connect with the experience and aspirations of that gendered audience" (Lusted, 1991, pp. 257-258).

<sup>37</sup> Respectable/Modernist exceptions to proscriptive rules of adornment are illustrated in a memory work text and illustrated opposite.

The plethora of advice available to young women across a spectrum of texts at almost any moment in the post-war period suggests that fashioning appropriately in specific contexts remains imperative and that adornment is fraught with risk/barely under control. Jewellery has its own history of abuse. In 1986, *Accessory Chic* advised: "The type of ring(s) you wear is a highly personal choice, but make sure it co-ordinates with all your other pieces and styles of jewellery. Be careful that the combination of your ring with other jewellery never overpowers you. For example, combining a chunky moulded silver ring with heavy silver bracelets can weight you down. Conversely, several small rings on each hand looks just as flashy and overdone" (Roderick, 1986, p. 51).

<sup>38</sup> Griffin's research focussed on a group of working-class girls from fifth form colleges in Birmingham. Her interviews assessed how these so called 'typical girls' viewed the world and their prospects: "Maintaining some control over students' appearance was [an] aspect of the school's authority, and this was especially focussed on young women. Resistances to these constraints included ignoring the school uniform altogether, or wearing a rough approximation of it; wearing clear nail varnish and barely detectable make-up; and interminable struggles over skirt length, hairstyles and shoes". One teacher was more lenient than others, but had her own views of appropriate fashionings of femininity that did not accord with those of her pupils "Well I've never minded the girls wearing a bit of make-up. Why should we try to force 15 or 16 year olds not to? You just can't get away with it nowadays. But they turn up with make-up all over their faces. Great dark lines over their eyes and halfway round to their ears. Purple lipstick, green nails and I don't know what else. (laugh) So I just tell them to wash it off. If only they would come with proper make-up, some nice blue eye-shadow, a bit of mascara, lipstick" (Griffin, 1985, p. 21).

The Scottish TV comedy sketch series *Chewin' the Fat* caricatures school girls fashioning dissidence and the overreactions of a puritanical teacher to 'East End' jewellery and cosmetics; she connects both to sexual laxity, lack of intelligence etc. In this long-running sketch the fashion dissidents are always triumphant.

In a memory work text 'A' remembered: "Music Teacher, Miss D would periodically check to see if clear nail varnish was being worn by girls in her class by demanding that they form a line, extend their hands and move them slowly in order that she could detect, by the light they reflected whether they were 'guilty' or not."



of any kind, a note to this effect must be sent to the Headmaster and such items are to be left in the School office during school hours for safe-keeping, and the required dose taken there.

10. Dress and Appearance.

(i) All pupils are expected to be clean, well-groomed and neatly dressed in the School uniform in force for the time being.

(ii) School uniform will be worn on all school occasions unless permission to the contrary has been granted.

(iii) No jewellery will be worn and no make-up of any kind is permitted. Earrings are not allowed but girls may wear plain studs or sleepers. Coat badges - only badges of official organisations may be worn and no more than one badge at any time.

(iv) Boys must be clean shaven and sideboards must not extend below the base of the ear.

(v) In the case of boys, hair should not extend below the collar.

11. Conduct.

(i) Pupils are expected to behave in a quiet and orderly manner and to show courtesy to and consideration for others inside and outside the School. Their conduct should at all times reflect credit on the School.

(ii) Pupils must keep to the right in corridors and on the stairs. Running in the corridors is forbidden.

(iii) The main entrance to either School building is to be used only by the Sixth Form.

(iv) Pupils may not walk on the front lawns at Thorne Road.

(v) Smoking is forbidden on School premises and, in School uniform, outside the School. It is an offence to be in possession of tobacco at School. Pupils are forbidden to frequent licensed premises in School uniform.



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THE KENNEDY DIVORCE JACKIE IS TRYING TO STOP!

# MOTION PICTURE

OCT. 35¢

*"Burton  
Won't  
Be My  
Last  
Man!"*

*Angry Liz  
Declares*

Robert Vaughn :  
**"HOW I  
SEE GOD"**

RETAILERS: See Last Page for Special Display Plan

MB



Ellen: It's kind of like, you know, Ann-Marie in your department? Ann-Marie is a lovely wee girl, she's a lovely wee girl, saddled with a name like Ann-Marie and coming from the Gorbals is starting off on - [Laughter]

AP: - I was thinking of talking to Ann-Marie, because of the reasons you -

Ellen: - Aha, she just needs, she needs to change, she's been taken out of an environment and put in a new one, [sensing my dismay...?] and she is just blossoming.

AP: I really rate her, she's a smart, smart lassie she really is.

Ellen: Today, I was speaking to her today she had her tee shirt on with this flashy bit here [indicates slit across front] she looked fantastic – for a club you know that's - I felt - I would never say that, but I just thought, you know, Ann-Marie, but she might get to that stage...

Ellen, who had grown up in a working-class household had become aware of un/acceptable forms of fashioning through her exposure both to independent film and music stars and the cultures of Higher Education. She expressed her hopes - that Ann-Marie's fashioning would evolve, for her own sake - and fears for her from a position of knowledge on the meaningfulness and risks of inappropriate classed fashioning in institutions.<sup>39</sup>

### Elizabeth Taylor's fearsome fashioning of femininity

Being the most frequently cited popular model of female beauty for participants, it is of interest that Elizabeth Taylor enacted on and off screen representations of feminine excess that have been critiqued as grotesque. However, her eccentric take on fashion and respectability has rarely been interpreted (by feminists) as productively challenging notions of femininity.<sup>40</sup> Taylor's construction of

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<sup>39</sup> Beck has recorded the efforts made by Goodyear to adapt her uniform, she had a relative who was a part-time seamstress and thus made "Subtle alterations." A school friend remembered: "Her summer dresses had capped sleeves, which weren't regulation. The fashion was waspie belts, so she had her dresses pulled in with a waspie belt. They were the days of paper nylon petticoats. So she had one to make her dress stick out. Her hair was always in a ponytail with a little kiss curl dangling over her forehead. She always looked stunning in her sports shorts" (Beck, 1995, p. 26).

<sup>40</sup> Pauline Kael's review in the *New Yorker* of Taylor's role in *X, Y and Zee* (1972) comes close and was welcomed by the star, according to her biographer Maddox: "She wears her hair like upholstery, to balance the upholstery of flesh. The weight she has put on in these last years has not made her gracefully voluptuous; she's too hardboiled to be Rubenesque. The weight seems to have brought out this coarseness, and now she basks in vulgarity. She uses it as a form of assault in *X, Y and Z* and I don't think she's ever before been as strong a star personality. What a loud and uncontrolled performer like Taylor offers her audience [...] is the element of accident and risk, the possibility that something grotesque may be revealed. But there is also the excitement of seeing a woman who has vast reserves of personality and who wants to come forward, who wants to make contact. There's a documentary going on inside this movie [...] It's of a woman declaring herself to be what she has become. Like everyone else I adored the child Elizabeth Taylor, but I have never liked her as much since this bizarre exhibition. She's Beverly Hills Chaucerian, and that's as high and low as you can get" (Kael cited in Maddox, 1977, p. 242). Maddox noted that Burton would ask Taylor to 'Give us the Look' – of fearsome femininity. "Everybody knows *The Look*. It's in all her movies. Back goes the head. The nostrils pinch in. The eyes widen and the power of a thousand cold blue light bulbs flares out. It's a terrifying sight, accentuated by all the little winking, glittering diamond eyes on her fingers and ears" (Maddox,



feminine excess was beyond fashion and even film costuming. In her later career, she increasingly controlled her fashioning, a form of what I have defined as Royal Taste.<sup>41</sup> Freeman has summarised how Taylor's fashioning history reflects growing self-determination, a model of anti-fashioning identified with by specific audiences of women:

In the 1950s she embodied to perfection the studio's prescribed image of the perfectly prim sweetheart [...] In the 1960s you can begin to see her taking things more her own way, sexing up even the most innocuous seeming studio-chosen outfit, raising the hem and lowering the cleavage [...] By the 1970s it's the turbans, the heavily jewelled hands, the purple satin lounge suits [...] (a look that inspired a whole demographic, and whose influence, as anyone who has ever been to Florida can testify, persists) And this is the style this erstwhile fashion icon has stuck with for the past four decades (Freeman, 2003, p. 8).

Similarly, Phoenix's success in *Coronation Street*, licensed her to wrest control of Elsie Tanner's fashioning from the production team overwhelming the character with the actor's excessive taste:

For thirteen years, from earliest Street days, a succession of scriptwriters, directors and producers had fought to win control of Elsie Tanner's wardrobe, and finally declared it a glorious failure. Pat had become a law unto herself in make-up, hairstyling and whatever she chose to wear. She had set out to shape Elsie Tanner into a screen legend, and in her book, legends never wore old coats and rollers (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 28).<sup>42</sup>

### 6.3 Sentiment and excess, abstraction and taste

Having alluded to excessive forms of working-class women's taste and its reflection in media contexts, this section addresses the disdain for excess expressed in high-brow media critiques and ironic high fashion appropriations. As in the broader fields of architecture, fashion and interior design, jewellery tastes in the latter half of the twentieth century reflect tastes that acknowledge Modernism (e.g. Postmodernism) or appear unconscious of/counter to it. This paradigm has tended to broadly

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1977, p. 237). Tyler has interpreted this as a trait of 'phallic women' including characters like Alexis Carrington. Those who "oscillate between being the subjects and the objects of the gaze and phallic mastery" (Tyler, 1991, p. 43).

<sup>41</sup> Maddox has detailed how Taylor had turned up to play Rosie Probert in Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* at the 1971 Venice Film Festival wearing "full Cleopatra eye makeup. When it was suggested that this was inappropriate, [for the part of a Welsh prostitute] she replied 'I always do my own make-up'" (ibid. p. 221).

<sup>42</sup> Podmore confirmed "Pat always saw herself as a star and worked very hard, with the help of some very diligent press relations, to make sure the status was accorded to Miss Phoenix and not Elsie Tanner. She was probably the first member of the cast to be widely and equally known by both her real and stage names" (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 28). Bassey, Diana Ross and other female representatives of show business royalty have used the title Miss in a way that evokes the strange imperiousness of the Royal 'We'. Penny Valentine noted of Dusty "That was the thing about 'Madam' – as her loyal friend and unofficial manager Vicki Wickham and I called her..." (Valentine, 1999, p. 18).



reflect the perceived cultures of middle-class and working-class tastes respectively. In that these positions are not biologically determined and individual tastes are subject to social, cultural and historical factors, the territory is difficult to navigate if generalisations are to be avoided. The proliferation of objects and images, the growth in the notion of meaningful or meaning-laden design and the rhetoric of postmodernity in design fields make efforts to discuss class tastes even more perilous<sup>43</sup>. However, in the following section I discuss some patterns of dis/taste identified in the course of my examination of media texts, and in research participants' contributions.

### **Stealth wealth**

Although working-class women have been the primary focus for media and broader political and social disapprobation, non-ironic forms of excessive femininity are subject to social censure regardless of class and gender as Jean, a working-class participant who regarded herself as cultured articulated:

Yes, well I know I have always been quite reserved about my dress sense [...] and I don't like, I think sometimes women can take it too far and I don't like it and I think it's very trashy you know, and I don't know, and I don't think it helps other women you know what I mean? Because then we are perceived as well, tarts or whatever [Laughter] but I certainly don't like anything too done up, overdone you know, and I think you can look just as beautiful, you can be dressed up, it doesn't mean to say that you need to be an old frump like Margaret Rutherford or something, but do you know what I mean? There's a way of dressing, you have that taste but you don't go over the top.

AP: And do you think there are any class associations when you are thinking there about this tarty way?

Jean: Oh yes, aha.

AP: And what would you say there, tell me about the class of the person that you had in your head there this sort of -?

Jean: I would say middle-class tart. [...] I think because I think they have come into money and they don't really know how to dress and they just go mad, do you know what I mean? I mean people who have it, I mean, I think it depends on their background and what they are influenced

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<sup>43</sup> Ambiguous and/or paradoxical appropriations of low fashionings for high-brow consumption are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.



by, today you know, I think dress sense has went a wee bit over the top sometimes, you know what I mean? When you see certain people.

Ellen's middle-class tastes, cultivated and expressed through involvement in higher education and specific music and film consumption distinguished her from her working-class family. Her analysis of her Aunt Moira's fashioning to excess, found excuses for her flashiness: "*Moira is like the epitome of your Canadian and American aunty, you know, she's not flashy, I mean, there's probably a lot more flashier than her, [...] when she comes here and she's got her jewellery, she wears it all because she doesn't want to leave any of it behind you know*".

It is indubitably women who have found themselves indicted as the emblems of artifice, the essence of the decorative.<sup>44</sup> In media texts' address to middle-class audiences and readers there is a routine castigation of the decorative and excessive through the demonisation of women. In contrast, modernism and an invariably gendered conceptualisation of minimalism are, at least in the broadsheets, perennially feted and fashionable.<sup>45</sup> In 2000, Lucia van der Post defined the most recent diversification of minimalist and modernist taste as 'stealth wealth'. The aim of its proponents was to signal wealth and elitism in so subtle a register that only the similarly tasteful could intuit their status, engendering new forms of, '*complicated snobbisms*'" (Van der Post, 2000, p. 6).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> (Notwithstanding the critiques of David Beckham, so-called medallion men or Black male fashion excesses) - arousing what Ruth Padel has described Modernism's concomitant 'brutal' rejection of them: "*Aesthetic judgement was compromised by desire; women were disgustingly implicated in seductive ornament, in gratification*" (Padel, 2001, p. 43).

<sup>45</sup> For example, Rumbold's *Observer* article entitled 'The Perfect Family Home,' extolled the virtues of the extreme modernism of British celebrity architect John Pawson's home, a perfection marred only by his wife's nostalgia and clutter. Pawson mentioned his wife, "*in connection with crimes against minimalism. She is the one who fills the cupboards in their almost entirely bare, white bedroom with endless bags of clothes. She it is who flies the flag for nostalgia and insists on keeping a pair of what he regards to be hideous candlesticks that once belonged to his mother*" (Rumbold, 1996, p. 8). His self-conscious asceticism can be understood in the context of design history as a form of Modernist backlash; a reactionary response to the iconoclastic, maverick Postmodernity that followed in the wake of the Memphis design group's innovation (Radice, 1995). Pawson merely reiterated the Modernist truths that extend back to Loos and beyond, as I discuss in the Literature Review. Far from being a lone voice preserving the traditions of Modernism from the crimes of feminising ornament, Pawson capitalised on the widespread renaissance of austere taste amongst an influential section of the British middle class. In fact, Modernist taste had never been in jeopardy. European designers notably Dieter Rams were confidently and profitably upholding Modernism in the white heat of post modernity. In his 1989 article, *Omit the Unimportant* Rams claims that "*Good design means as little design as possible*" (Rams in V. Margolin, 1989, p. 111). Bourdieu confirms that "*'intellectuals' and 'artists' have affinities with the ascetic aspect of aesthetics and are inclined to support all artistic revolutions conducted in the name of purity and purification, refusal of ostentation [...] and ornament.*" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 176).

<sup>46</sup> "*New money doesn't give a toss for many of the old totems of wealth. New money prefers chinos and polo shirts to Savile Row suits, minimalist pads to chandelier-hung mansions, hanging out with pals to white-tie charity dos. New money is fast redefining the parameters of modern luxury – more youthful, more fun and, above all, more subtle. It's not about show and it's not about swank. [...] Stealth wealth is not about spending less (the irony is that it can very often cost a great deal more) but the power and the swagger are subler. A minimalist pad by John Pawson may look as austere as a monk's cell, but believe me, it doesn't come cheap. [citing the partners at Goldman Sachs as exponents of Stealth Wealth] Their wives take pride in spending in an anonymous, 'below the parapet' kind of way; they have large and beautifully furnished houses but the look is never 'showy'. They dress impeccably but never swankily*" (van der Post, 2000, p. 6). Despite the fact that Van der Post is herself a partner in a company supplying luxuries to the super-rich, the rhetoric of Stealth Wealth preserves traditional gender divisions; business partners are men, wives are busied in homemaking.

A Modernist, stealth wealth ethos was evident across the broadsheet media in this period, for example "*Less is more' has always been the [Jil] Sander ethos: the less she gives the more you pay for it*" (Lowthorpe, 2000, p. 7). Mary Riddell's interpretation of New Puritanism or New Frugalism merely reiterated a Modernist mantra "*While being rich is never likely to be passé, looking rich is for vulgaritians only*" (Riddell, 2000, p. 28). Whilst maintaining a steady campaign against feminine excess broadsheets have enthusiastically promoted other forms of stealth wealth including 'glamorous utility style' (Sawyer, 2002 pp. 38-39).





39. *Spare Rib* fashions, Issue 2, August 1972.



Fashions in *Fab 208* annual, 1970, page 43.



The motivation for restating elitism in the form of Modernism at the end of the twentieth century is contestable. It is arguable that with the proliferation of demonstrations of excess by soaps stars, pop stars and forms of hip hop so-called ghetto fabulousness, a more fugitive language of exclusivity reserved for the self-identified legitimate rich was taking refuge in the manner of Modernism. Inevitably, stealth wealth exponents were dismissive of flamboyant jewellery, with diamonds and gold being deemed sullied by their perceived availability to working-class consumers.<sup>47</sup> And whereas working-class icons of feminine excess including Goodyear and Viv Nicholson flamboyantly celebrated their successes with pink champagne, according to van der Post the elite was more likely to express their wealth through bottled water, albeit from Cape Grim in Tasmania “*where the rain falls from air that has blown in from Antarctica, making it the least polluted air space in the world*” (ibid.)<sup>48</sup>

### Making feminist jewellery

Feminists’ opposition to femininity raises the question of whether the feminine ‘other woman’ was a necessary fiction in order to produce an ‘oppositional’ feminist identity’ (Hollows, 2000, p. 17).

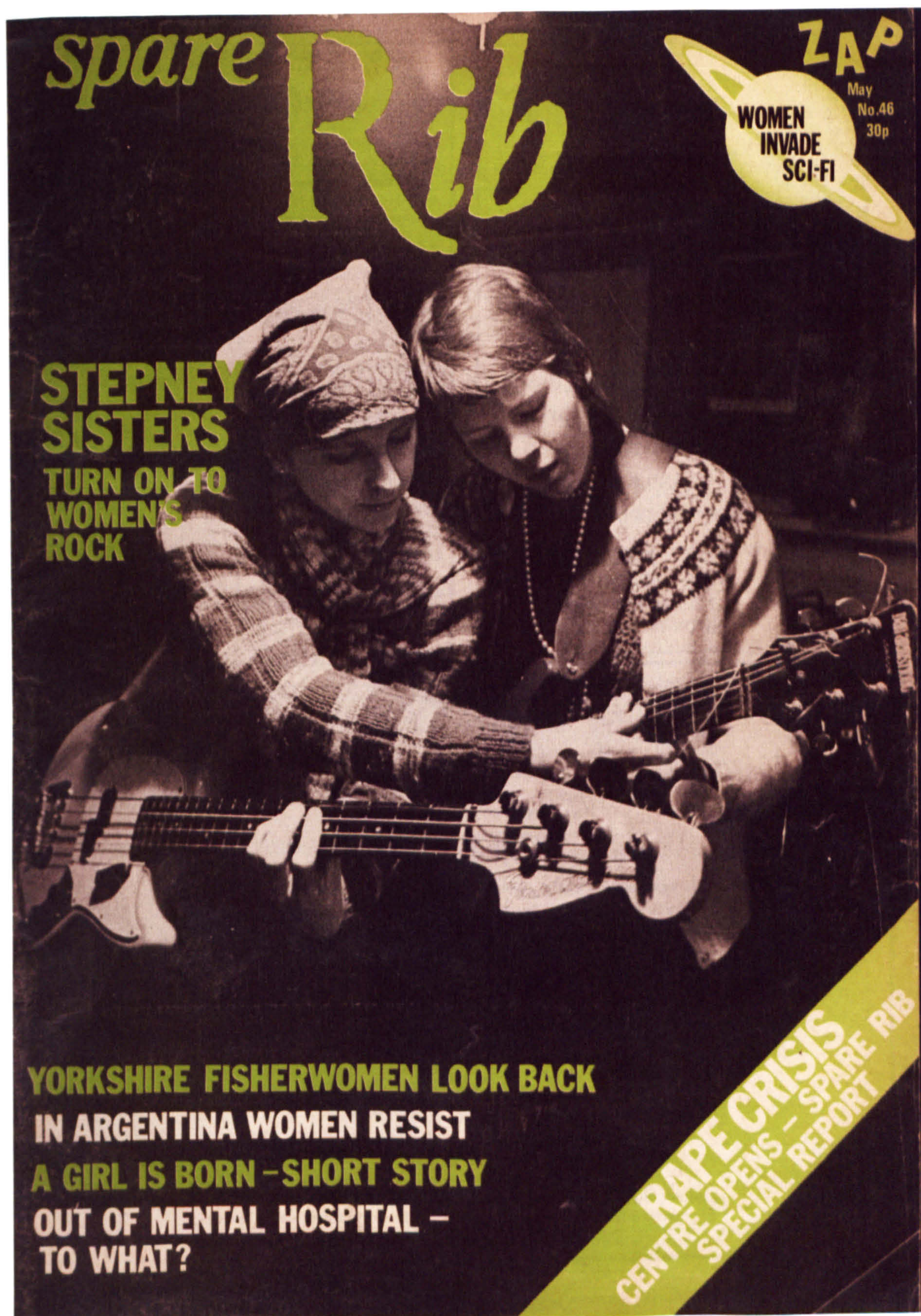
An aspect of this research has linked the development of Modernist and middle-class fashioning aesthetics with the notion of feminist taste. Representations of jewellery and fashioning more broadly in the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* illustrates how facets of bourgeois taste and Modernist fashion determined the look of archetypical British feminism from the late 1970s.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> “The whole ritual engagement-wedding-eternity rings with diamond necklace for the mistress in due course [...] has become rather unfashionably H Samuel. You can after all buy gold and diamond jewellery at Argos these days. [...] In an era of Naomi Klein and Gothenburg when we are all experiencing consumer ennui it is no longer cool to flaunt your wealth. (It is ok to have it of course, just not to have it in a gaudy meretricious kind of way.) Diamonds are for never in the modern world” (Bedell, 2001, p. 4).

<sup>48</sup> Viv Nicholson celebrated her pools win by having her hair dyed “pink champagne blonde” (Constable and Farrington, 1994, p. 17). Goodyear toasted her MBE award with pink champagne “... at her local hotel near Rochdale, after arriving in a gold Rolls Royce and buying drinks for the house” (Fowler, 1995, p. 1). In her interpretation of ‘ghetto fabulous’ Shephard notes that it was, “Puff Daddy who set the style- white Rolls Royce, pink champagne, cream Versace suit, gold and more gold” (Shephard, 2000, p. 43).

<sup>49</sup> *Spare Rib* represented feminist fashioning in its widespread use of photography, cartoons, advertising and features on ‘Looks’. Notwithstanding *Rib*’s implicit claims to be eschewing fashion I have noted in lectures that images of *Rib* advertising never failed to trigger laughter. I have interpreted this reaction as part nostalgia and/or a recognition of the fact that ‘Nature Shoes’ or ‘Ragged Robin’ wraparound skirts were indeed representative of outmoded fashion. Walter has written, “There is, after all, a look that says Seventies feminism, just as clearly as there is a look that says fifties housewife or Twenties flapper. You can see it, for instance, in the photograph of the Boston Women’s Collective that fronts the seventies health handbook ‘Our bodies ourselves’: long hair, no bras, batik wraparound skirts. There was also a look that said eighties feminism – dungarees, short hair and bright earrings. How can we trust feminism’s traditional promise to release us from the demands of fashion when it seems to trap us into such a precise range of sartorial responses” (Walter, 1998, p. 4).





40. Stepney Sisters, front cover, *Spare Rib*, May, 1976, Issue 46



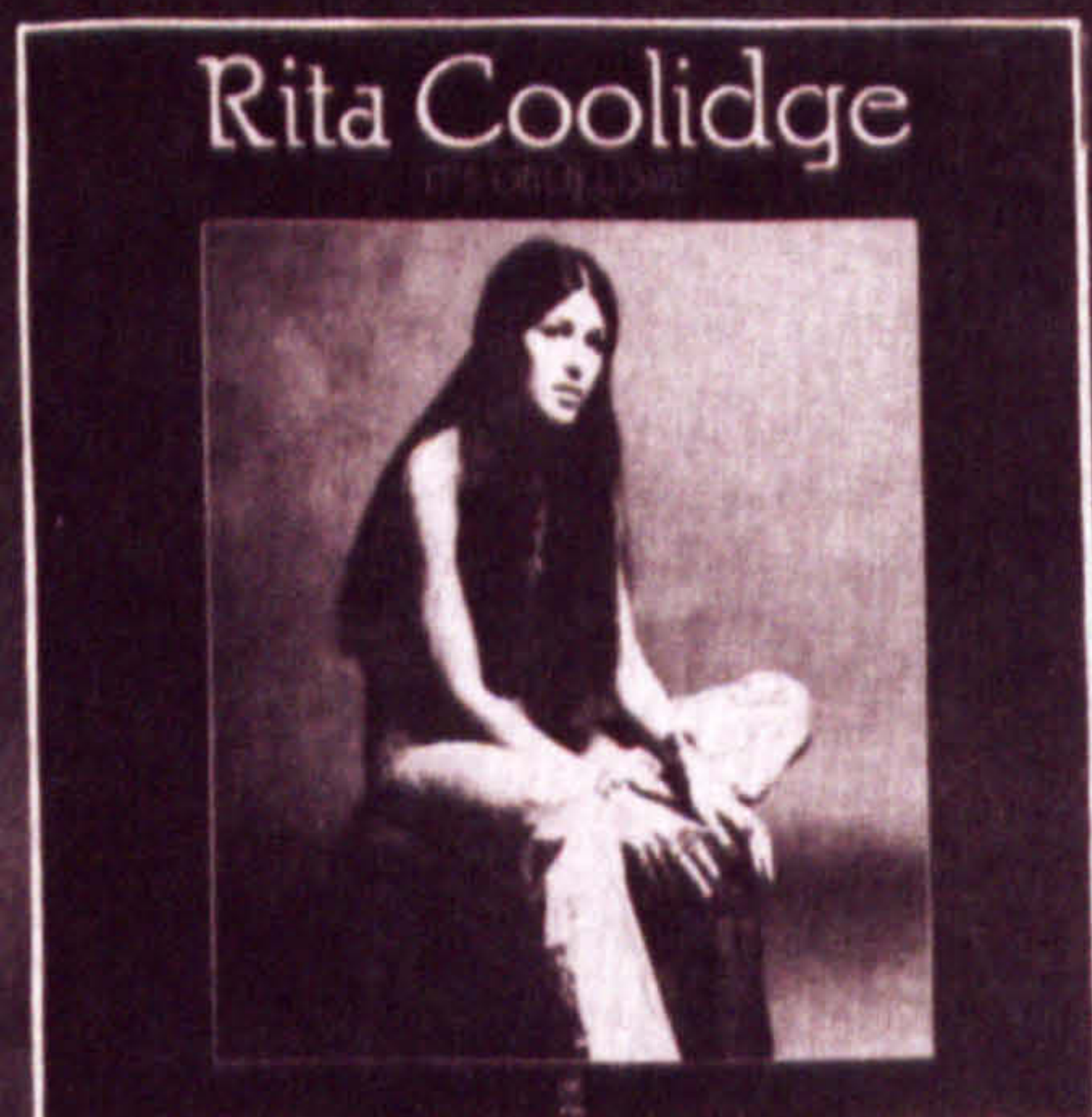
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41. Advertisement for Rita Coolidge album, back cover, *Spare Rib*, December 1975, Issue 42.



In the second issue, the styling of models resembled the fashion illustrations found in contemporary girls' annuals.<sup>50</sup> In subsequent issues, when the notion of fashion spreads had been replaced by self-consciously natural representations of women on its cover<sup>51</sup>, the 'models' began to embody a divergence of feminist taste from the forms of femininity in mainstream girls' and women's literature. Jewellery became minimal, ethnic, abstract, symbolic and/or were consciously political attempts to avoid Modernist critiques of decoration and feminist critiques of fashioning for the male gaze. So-called real women, including women's music collectives, began to embody *Rib's* taste in feminist fashion.<sup>52</sup> From the mid 1970s the will to adorn appeared to have infected the readership and collectives as the first range of feminist jewellery was promoted in the small ads.<sup>53</sup> In illustrations, photographs and advertising graphic, humorous, often political feminist badges become ubiquitous, supplanting brooches. *Spare Rib* produced its own bestseller.

Excessive fashionings of femininity were still permissible in specific forms. The critique of Tammy Wynette in 1975 cited earlier appeared in an issue that had a full page, back cover advertisement promoting country rock star Rita Coolidge's album *It's only love*, Coolidge sported a huge mane of apparently unstyled hair.<sup>54</sup> Her representation, in soft-focus monochrome, made her ethnicity opaque, and suggested a proximity to earlier exoticised 'minstrels', Baez, Felix and Buffy Saint Marie rather than her sequin-encrusted country music contemporaries. Her Native American styled jewellery, in particular ornate rings on each finger, provided the focus of the image as her hands fanned out to display them. Silver cuffs and necklace completed a vision of excess. The juxtaposition of Wynette and Coolidge, signifying in/appropriate un/acceptable forms of adornment and fashioning respectively, provide the demarcations of femininity reflected in *Spare Rib's* feminism. Editorially

<sup>50</sup> For example *Fab 208*. The look was a retro, 1940s big beads, twin set and pearls style and included the first of many endorsements of expensive Biba products and stylings.

<sup>51</sup> With the exception of occasional stars like Jane Fonda and Marsha Hunt.

<sup>52</sup> From the late 1970s the Ova collective, and the Stepney Sisters, could also be seen in their own pamphlets and song sheets wearing discreet lesbian, specifically linked women's symbol, brooches and chokers made from leather thongs with single beads. Similar styles and tastes were represented in contemporary feminist texts such as *Our Bodies Ourselves*, (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1978); *Feminist Revolution* (Redstockings of the Women's Liberation Movement eds., 1975) etc. By 1964 a bourgeois anti urban, homespun aesthetic, in fashioning and broader habitus had been constructed. This androgynous styling, evident in the later *Rib* fashioning impacted on the design of costume jewellery. As early as 1964 Alison Adburgham, the *Guardian* Women's Page's fashion correspondent noted: "The young have embraced the country-into-town look. There is even a town into country costume jewellery section at Harrods featuring leather and wooden beads... The wind of change to tweeds and shirts and sweaters has fawned the cult of HIS and HER... matching sweaters for husband and wife, mufflers for boy and girl friend, shirts for him that are worn by her, deerstalker hats that are cosily bisexual" (Adburgham, 1964, p. 6).

<sup>53</sup> Predominantly simple designs in silver, included labryses and single or linked women's symbols, the latter representing lesbianism. According to Mary Daly labryses were "Used in contemporary times by radical and lesbian feminists to indicate woman identification. Labryses represent 'double axes' of our own Wild wisdom and wit, which cut through the mazes of man-made mystification, breaking the mind-bindings of master minded doublethink" (Daly, 1984, p. 222).

<sup>54</sup> Not unlike the longed-for hair of research participant Elizabeth's imagination, so strongly associated by her with art students and grammar school girls.





Humour and intelligence. The women we wanted to look like. Dame Judi Dench and Glenda Jackson MP





*Spare Rib* repeatedly connected good and bad fashionings with good and bad taste as defined in the Modernist tradition. Good being the relatively unadorned, pared down, functional lack of excess.<sup>55</sup>

Liberal media from the 1960s on, whether *The Guardian* Women's Page or *Spare Rib* was not immune to equating taste in fashioning with sexual morality and young women's morals are still frequently linked to fashioning in contemporary *Guardian* articles by feminist contributors.<sup>56</sup> BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* mirrored many *Guardian* Women's Page perspectives on femininity and fashioning; middle-class liberalism inflected with feminism. Tellingly, presenter Jenni Murray cited British actors, Judi Dench and Glenda Jackson as epitomising *Woman's Hour's* role models, the women "we wanted to look like." The perhaps unintentional canonisation of the programme's own taste is nevertheless a revealing piece of evidence of the appeal of unadorned femininity for (white?) middle-class audience of women in the post-war period.<sup>57</sup>

Notwithstanding the prohibitions inferred in aspects of 1970s British feminism against excessive forms of adornment, the stars of the Second-Wave frequently demonstrated the caveats articulated by Stern. Feminist jewellery, as it appeared in *Spare Rib*, rejected sentimentality and a notion of romanticism coached in the vernacular of retro Victoriana. Literal prosiness inferred false consciousness and was replaced by literal sloganeering in badges and T-shirts.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> This is reflected in Sandy's account of exchanging her make-up and bouffanting for her "dykey hair-do and [her] one earring in," a strategy of identification and a desire to belong to a feminist community. As Carolin has stated, *Spare Rib* was in this respect, one of the few texts available for lesbians and feminists to construct a 'tribal' identification (Carolin, 1998, pp. 30).

<sup>56</sup> For example, Decca Aitkenhead claimed to have been scandalised to find what women were wearing after her move back to Britain in 2001 "Bars and clubs are crowded with girls who could give a *Dynasty* starlet a run for her money, and some. It's a wonder the gold strappy high-heeled sandals can bear the weight of so much make-up and hairspray, and this perhaps accounts for the precaution of wearing so little in between... sequins and lip gloss now count as dressing down." (Aitkenhead, 2001). Resorting to a further reference to the excessive fashioning of another popular TV serial she dubbed this "Dallas chic" (ibid.) and identified the main culprits of this unacceptable trend as girls aged between 11-18. She indicted mothers too in a move that fused fashioning with implied sexual availability: "This has caused quite a fuss amongst their mothers, who despite being happy to look like Moscow hookers themselves, think it is a scandal for their little girls to go out dressed as lap dancers. Britney Spears has been singled out for special blame, and there has been much debate on where her famous virginity figures in her crimes as fashion role model, for there are doubts over whether the stars' chastity can really be said to 'count' when she looks like such a slag" (ibid.). In her lament for a feminist movement that, she claimed, ironically, never was, columnist Polly Toynbee echoed the view of young women as 'sex obsessed', an insight read off from their clothing: "There is a dangerous mythology among young women of good intent who imagine there was once a glorious feminist movement, lost somewhere in the mists of time back in the early 70s. They look at young women nowadays, dollies and ladettes in strappy shoes and strapless dresses, dizzy, directionless, blotto on Bacardi Breezers and as sex-obsessed as the characters in *Sex in the city*" (Toynbee, 2002, p. 8). That Toynbee might not know many women on low incomes may be inferred from her need to go under cover/native "for a few weeks" to extrapolate information about the experiences of the low-paid subject in her most recent publication *Hard Work: Life in Low Pay Britain* (Toynbee, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Photographs of Dench and Jackson, both White, both in their middle-age, both photographed with short, unstyled hair, neither wearing make-up, both wearing white shirts and black jackets, Dench with an ethnic styled scarf, Jackson with a tie, both wearing an abstract brooch on their right lapels and both wearing small gold earrings, are framed by the text, "Humour and intelligence. The women we wanted to look like. Dame Judi Dench and Glenda Jackson MP" (Murray, 1996 – no pagination). The notion of Judi Dench as the *Woman's Hour* or at least Jenni Murray's icon of style was reiterated in a feature, 'What is Style?' on 13 May, 2003 (BBC, *Woman's Hour*, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Also sold through *Spare Rib* and having a distinctly Picasso or Matisse inspired Modernist form.





43. Ova, *Musically speaking*, promotional leaflet, undated but 1982?



The feminist taste for iconoclastic, and yet nonetheless detailed and decorative adornments was to inform or reflect punk aesthetics, a style adopted more or less seamlessly into both the format and modelling of fashion in *Spare Rib*.<sup>59</sup>

### Paradigms of sentimental excess and abstract taste

But despite the impact of feminism, punk, queer culture and postmodernism's rejection of nostalgia and narratives, jewellery that is invested with forms of sentimentality and prosiness has enjoyed widespread and enduring popularity amongst working-class consumers including youth markets. Being non-ironic and refusing Modernism, this form of consumption could be said to *resist fashion*. The resistance of aspects of working-class cultures to (post) modernist diktats, including excessive emotional investment in ornamental objects and decorative fashionings is both critiqued and underplayed by spokespersons for Modernist taste. This tendency is pervasive in an array of art, design, music and fashion criticism. In a review of a Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition of Faberge eggs.<sup>60</sup> Pearman reiterated the *evolutionary* notion of design and fine art<sup>61</sup> suggesting the anachronism of valuing outmoded decoration and functionless objects. A taste evolution situates the working classes and women in particular as wilfully sustaining a false -consciousness about design and art in their taste for vulgar, ersatz Royal excess, expressed in the enduring popularity of the Franklin Mint. Pearman commented,

The whole idea of the trinket has become so degraded. It sounds horribly snobbish and unpolitically correct to say this but when the working class was truly poor, you didn't get trinkets, but now any sort of working-class household has got a mantelpiece full of them. It's from Faberge to the Franklin Mint. Collectable thimbles, sentimental statuettes [...] There were lovely little things that royals bought for one another, but the Franklin Mint is what it has come down to. We can't tell anymore. We can appreciate craftsmanship, but kitsch has intervened, when everything is copied and replicated and diluted (ibid. p. 2).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *Spare Rib* advertised jewellery was worn by feminist performers e.g. Ova, in their handbill 'Musically Speaking' The band members also ironically modelled leopard skin and lurex.

<sup>60</sup> Subtitled, 'The Tsar's trinketeer, [...] has earned a unique place in British affections – on the naff mantelpiece'. Hugh Pearman, *Sunday Times* architecture and design critic, Sarah Kent of *Time Out* and Terence Conran demonstrated a unanimous antipathy to Faberge and his kitsch successors.

<sup>61</sup> "It was an opulent era [late 1880s] when that sort of thing mattered, and we had not discovered things such as Japan and the idea of simplicity" (Pearman cited in Margolis, 1994, p. 9).

<sup>62</sup> Kent's critique indicted women: "It doesn't mean anything. What I find particularly appalling about them [Faberge eggs] is not a quality they have in themselves, but something they have spawned. There are millions of women around the country doing fake Faberge and doing it very badly" (ibid.). In the research/exhibition *Sign of the Times*, a 'snapshot' of taste in British homes, curator Nicholas Barker confirms Kent's fears concluding that the "fundamental difference expressed through taste is gender". A difference articulated in resistance to, or adoption of Modernist taste: "The overwhelming majority of men and women whom we interviewed revealed taste preferences which confirmed to a wide range of gender stereotypes. In interview after interview



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Reflecting the findings of Barker (1992), Painter (undated) and Boudieu (1996) narrative and literal messages, decoration and ornament characterised the jewellery discussed or worn by the majority of the research participants. They noted that in most cases their jewellery consisted of gifts from family members.

Gabrielle: Yes. I used to wear nail varnish yes, and I used to wear about four rings and I used to wear chains, a locket and I had a fetish for butterflies and I've got a lot of butterflies, brooches, I've got a little enamel butterfly brooch and another one that's sort of gold with a few little - they are not diamonds, stones in, yes.

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Ellen: But I really don't even think about it and I don't I think - I'm just - I'm not that unadventurous but I'm quite adventurous, I remember one year I bought earrings in Skye, in Portree, you know that lovely wee shop up the stairs? And it was a knife and fork, a silver knife and a silver fork and I just loved them, they were like twenty eight pounds or something and I thought, I have got to, but those earrings, they are so fantastic and I wear them if I'm going out to dinner somewhere posh. [Laughter] They are tinkerbells, they are so tiny.

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AP: [to young student at Northend College, encrusted with jewellery including a name necklace stating 'Bitch'] You've got some amazing jewellery on, is that - when did you start getting interested in jewellery?

Yvonne: When I was about twelve or something when I went to secondary.

AP: And why do you think you started being interested in jewellery?

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women described how their tastes in the home centred around concerns such as comfort, co-ordination, ornamentation, sentimentality and fantasy. Men on the other hand – particularly the under 40s – seemed eager to conceal the evidence of personal emotion, were irritated by all but the largest of ornaments, were embarrassed by excessive decoration – particularly floral designs – and preferred instead to be surrounded by things which they considered visually impressive. The patterns they chose were generally simple but striking and their favourite colours were repeatedly shown to be white, black, red and grey" (Barker, 1992).

Critiquing on the popularity of Faberge, from his position as Britain's first popular celebrity Modernist, Conran expressed a stealth wealth perspective: "My idea of hell on earth is to go into a room where every surface has been covered with little Faberge eggs. It's the external manifestation of wealth that seems to me entirely misdirected. [...] Extraordinary workmanship goes into it but to me to have objects which are purely decorative and have no real aesthetic joy in them really is pointless" (ibid).

At the time of writing, The Franklin Mint is at the centre of a court case that looks likely to break the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. The charity sought to prevent the company owned by Stewart and Lynda Resnick, who, according to *The Times*, "compare themselves to the Renaissance Medicis" (Doran, 2003, p. 8) from producing dolls of Diana. Vivienne Parry, a trustee had described the dolls as "nasty, tacky and stealing the Princess's image and dignity" (Parry cited in Kennedy, 2003, p. 9). The judge at a preliminary US trial found that there was nothing to stop the "trinket-peddlers" (ibid). Lynda Resnick recently bought a faux pearl necklace once owned by Jackie Kennedy and jewels worn by the Duchess of Windsor at a charity auction. The pieces are now reproduced by the Franklin Mint but command nothing of the critical acclaim accorded to Kenneth Lane's Windsor fakes discussed later.



Jane: I don't know, just cause all my family started getting me it.

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Ellen: Umm. I had come to work at the Institute and I - because I'd never had my ears pierced beforehand [...] and then I got taken under the wing of all the admin. staff, people like Yvonne, that are still there and Lorraine [...] And they all had their ears - they were the - they were the same age as me but they seemed older somehow they were all married and a different type, they took me under their wing, anyway, one Christmas, it must have been the second Christmas I was there, so I would just be twenty one, they - I saw these earrings that I really liked and they were wee gold musical notes and I asked my Dad if he would get me them for my Christmas, they were out of Argos or Index or something like that and the poor man said he was at the shops, you know how they are always out of stock, he was in about fifty times to get these blumming earrings so I got my ears pierced [...] but since then I've never looked back because I just, you know, I could go out without make-up but I really feel naked without my earrings on, I just don't feel - [...]

AP: [...] you've got a beautiful bracelet on today, you've got what looks like a matching ring.

Ellen: It's a matching set. [Laughter]

AP: And a beautiful watch which is quite decorative as well.

Ellen: Oh it's a great watch Adele, you can't tell the time on it or anything. [Laughter] it's a lovely watch but you go -

AP: It's a triumph of form over function.

In their consumption of jewellery, many of the research participants linked this form of fashioning with sentimental, nostalgic and pleasurable identifications with family.<sup>63</sup> Asked about the meaning of her jewellery, Sue stated, *"Jewellery can get passed down and that, in a family an all. [...] So you might be wearing something that has a sentimental kind of thing. That's how I keep that [shows me a locket round her neck], my pal always tries to wear it but I never give it her, the rest of my rings are all stamped"*. Some alluded to their jewellery as heirlooms. Asked *"So where do you buy your jewellery from then?"* Yvonne replied: *"My nana give it, I don't buy it"*. Yvonne, wearing an impressive array of chains and rings had also received hers as presents from family members.

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<sup>63</sup> None, save one reference to a navel piercing experience, were acquisitions expressed as driven by fashion.



AP: So you've never bought any? It's all things that have been given to you, what about Diane [a friend and formidable jewellery wearer, not present at our meeting] does she buy it or is that all given as well?

Yvonne: Most of it is given to her as well. [...] She got a pendant with a picture of her granda on it, she always wears that one.

Although Ann conceded that her jewellery included, "*things that I've bought for myself every year*" she wore her gifts of jewellery from family members each day.

AP: Do you want to describe what you've got on?

Ann: [Laughter]

AP: Oh go on; tell me about this amazing one there, [large gold ring] do you remember when you got that?

Ann: Aha, my rings and that I've had for about 8 years now, just presents from my mum and that for Christmas and birthdays and that.

AP: And do you, do they mean something to you when you put them on? How does it make you feel?

Ann: I don't know, I've just always got them on. I take them off when I go to bed but when I get up in the morning I put them back on again. I'm a bit bare without them.

Gabrielle had chosen items of jewellery like her mother's.

Gabrielle: I just like the plain - erm...I wanted a locket because my mum had a locket, she used to wear a gold locket and yes, I just like the plain gold and chains, you know -

In his critique of the vulgarity of the spawn of Faberge, Pearman chose a significant comparison "*It's rather like those ghastly great rocks that Richard Burton used to give Elizabeth Taylor*" (Pearman cited by Margolis, 1994, p. 3). Taylor has occupied a significant position in discussions about taste, excess, pleasures for female audiences and 'queening it' in the post-war period. Jewellery generated a sentimental/vulgar symbolism for Taylor and her audiences. Emphasising her own jewellery's mythic,



romantic status whilst unconsciously and ironically echoing the experiences of participants', she claimed "*The jewellery I have has been given to me. I don't buy jewellery for myself*" (Maddox, 1977, p. 202).<sup>64</sup>

## 6.4 The demonisation and appropriation of trash.

### Bimbos, tarts and slags: demonising the fashioning of working-class women

The very meaning and value of a cultural object varies according to the system of objects within which it is placed, detective stories, science fiction or strip cartoons may be entirely prestigious cultural assets or be reduced to their ordinary value, depending on whether they are associated with avant-garde literature or music – in which case they appear as manifestations of daring and freedom – or combine to form a constellation typical of middle brow taste – when they appear as what they are, simple substitutes for legitimate assets. (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 88).

The political, social and cultural repudiation of working-class women was pervasive across the literature examined in the broader research project; this chapter notes the imbrication of distain for excessive fashioning in texts from the immediate post-war period on. Characteristically, hair, clothing, shoes, make-up and jewellery associated with working-class tastes are used as evidence of or represented as synonymous with stupidity, sexual immorality and criminality. Fashionings perceived to be associated with working-class women are routinely caricatured across all media forms of popular culture. Hebdige has noted that during the 1950s the 'cartography of taste' in Britain had taken on "*an aggressively reactionary flavour*"<sup>65</sup> and that this impetus was linked to the upper-classes' anxieties about class movement and post war growth in consumption – "*to clarify and redefine boundaries rendered opaque by post war 'affluence'*" (Hebdige, 1981, p. 41). Caricatures of so-called uncultured, brash, Americanised forms of femininity germinated and were frequently associated with specific parochial, Northern and/or industrial, urban contexts or alternatively seaside resorts which were perceived to be increasingly subject to invasion by the working classes.<sup>66</sup> An article in the 1956 *TV*

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<sup>64</sup> Steven Kuhn, University of Arizona and colleagues at Ankara University have recently excavated shells in a cave off the Levantine coast of Turkey used as jewellery that are 40,000 years old. He believes the shell jewellery were symbolic "*indicating kinship, group membership and marital status*" (O Connell, 2002, p. 10). This form of making/adornment is "*indicative of the first signs of truly modern behaviour and cognitive fluidity and symbolic expression*" (O Connell, 2002, p. 10).

<sup>65</sup> Exemplified by Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford's codification of 'U' and 'Non U',

<sup>66</sup> The post-war working-class seaside holiday was interpreted by intellectuals of the left and right as indicative of the pernicious influence of American culture, epitomised in Hoggart's parody, the Kosy Holiday Kamp, (Hebdige, 1981, p. 42). Hebdige notes that Orwell "*imagines a modern design for Coleridge's Kubla Khan consisting of air-conditioned caverns turned into a series of tea-grottoes in the Moorish, Caucasian and Hawaiian styles. The sacred river would be dammed up to make an artificially warmed bathing pool, and playing in the background there would be the constant pulse of muzak to prevent the onset of that*





So we open the egg  
d what do we find?  
a! Ha! We find  
g yolk! Now, for  
y next trick . . ."  
immy Cooper (left)  
njoins, and every-  
ing goes wrong. But  
en it wouldn't be  
immy if the tricks  
worked

Beryl Reid gave "Monica"  
a rest to introduce a new  
TV act—Marlene of the  
Midlands, the Teddy Boys'  
girl friend (right). Her  
glass globe earrings and  
her mad, be-bop slang  
started a craze

an imagine a baby  
ll, a baby who's just  
rattle taken away—  
hel Revnell. Here,  
her famous imper-  
or the benefit of a  
ror photographer

45. Beryl Reid as 'Marlene of the Midlands', featured in *TV Mirror* annual, unpaginated, 1956.



*Mirror* annual introduced an early example, comic actor Beryl Reid's creation 'Marlene of the Midlands, the Teddy Boy's girlfriend.'<sup>67</sup> This model – working-class, young, white women fashioning to excess exemplifying stupidity – was reprised continuously in homogenised and caricatured representations by both male and female performers from the immediate post-war period and, as I argue, is at large across contemporary media. More troubling is the conterminous demonisation of actual women who fashioned to excess, evident in the original demonisation of teenagers in the British press.<sup>68</sup> I found that the classist registers in texts from the 1950s and 1960s were still evident in contemporary media and that disdain for working-classes fashioned bodies and habitus' was widespread; from travel to fashion journalism, interior or lifestyle features and music criticism.<sup>69</sup> However, in the tradition of media panics about plagues of beehives, stilettos, platforms and panda eyes demonisation was most frequently articulated in the homogenisation of groups of girls or women.<sup>70</sup>

In 2002, the phenomenon of Chatham Girls prompted international internet traffic, chat rooms, a dedicated 'cult website' and interest from the broadsheets (Rowan, 2002, p. 5). The Chatham

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*dreaded thing – thought*" (ibid). Cynicism concerning of the working class at leisure is apparent in late twentieth century broadsheet media as I go on to discuss.

<sup>67</sup> Significantly, her costume featured huge "glass globe earrings."

<sup>68</sup> *The Guardian* Women's Page generated a strand of voyeuristic fascination and alarm in charting working-class youth fashions. For example, 'Bitter Sweet Seventeen' critiqued 'Miss Teenage USA' (*The Guardian*, 2 May, 1959), In 'Hockey Sticks and Spike Heels', Joan Tate berated young women dressing 'sexily' (Tate, 1959, p. 6) WJ Weatherby exposed, 'The World of the Beatnik' (Weatherby, 1961) adopting a similar tone that emphasised the distance between the researcher and the researched. Burchill has commented on how journalists have upheld notions of middle-class taste, and developed a 'sneering' tone, in their critiques of young, working-class female stars. In such criticism being identified, even compared to working-class women is still considered damning, she dubs this 'Social Racism', evident in print, TV and internet media. She asks: "What gives them the right to call the kids that Jamie Oliver recently trained up 'obnoxious lumpen proles' and 'hideous losers' or to decide that the extremely pretty and successful Natasha Hamilton of Atomic Kitten has a 'pram face' to quote one Sunday broadsheet, 'a pop star with a face that would better suit a girl pushing a pram around a council estate.' Before Natasha Kitten was Pram Face ex-Kitten Kerry Katona was known by users of the website Popbitch as 'chip shop' as she supposedly looked like she worked in one" (Burchill, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> The myth of saturation levels of political correctness suggests that such overt discrimination has been stymied. A strand of criticism in broadsheets, detectable in texts from the 1960s, adopts an almost mock anthropological, satirical tone in discussing working-class tastes and popular culture. - exemplified in this extract, from 1996, of a travel review in *The Guardian*, "Blackpool is the world capital of tat. What isn't a car park [...] is glitz and glitter and razzamatazz. [...] Blackpool is heaving. It's only 9.30am and the place is wobbling with humanity- queues are already forming for the car parks. [...] There is more flesh on display here than on all the nudism beaches in the world, and everyone here is dressed. [...] There is a woman who, I swear, has arms of such colossal, sensational thickness that you might think that there are two on either side, one tucked inside the other. And more, the promenade at Blackpool is like the Museum of the Moving Image, only the moving images are permanently on display on their screens, their human canvasses. The promenade offers one of the greatest displays of tattoos in the world" (Fort, 1996, p. 57).

<sup>70</sup> Caroline Haydon's analysis of the groups of girls in her neighbourhood was typical "Known as Nah-Nahs, Townies, Rudes or Trendies. Shazza is a female, Gazza a male, [this might be a lazy recalling /rehearsing of the tabloid names minted for Sheryl and Paul Gascoigne] They range from white girls who have gelled scraped back hair, wear puffa jackets and tight trousers to black girls with braided hair and short clingy skirts. Both sort large amounts of fake chunky gold jewellery, fake French manicured nails, fur trimmed padded jackets and collect Winnie the Pooh mobile phones, pencil cases teddies and hair bobbles. Another favoured accessory is a lollipop hanging out of the mouth or used as a hair grip" (Haydon, 2002, p. 4). This piece drew on the interpretations of one interviewee – Haydon's daughter. Her arguably crude interpretation of issues of class and race nevertheless hinted at the identifications, symbolism and significance of constructing fashioning perceived to mark middle class and working class and raced forms of femininity: "In the inner city it seems the choices are often made according to colour, with the black girls opting for the Townies set and the white girls, largely being the Grungers. Grungers are also seen as more middle class. 'The Grungers are middle class and trying to look cool and scruffy and street wise.' says [daughter] Lizzie, 'The Townies are more working class and they hate to look scruffy'" (Haydon, 2002, p. 4).



Girls site<sup>71</sup> adopted a mock-anthropological stance, providing an insight into the construction of contemporary folk devils and the misogynistic demonisation of working-class young women on the basis of their fashioning of feminine excess. It promoted the view of Chatham Girls as 'thick slags'. (Rowan, *ibid.*)<sup>72</sup> Although arguably the focus for the misogynistic obsessions of a small group or an individual, the site nevertheless reflects in an uncensored form attitudes that are identifiable more broadly as I go on to discuss.<sup>73</sup>

Generalisations that cast Chatham Girls as a drain on society; they left school *"with no education... to pursue as career as a single parent"*<sup>74</sup> illustrate Greer's contention that *"Men have no pity for young women who take so much crap, violence and endure illness and the rigours and dangers of the IVF mill. There is no political or social commitment to these vulnerable young women."*<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.geocities.com/chatham\\_girls/fashion.htm](http://www.geocities.com/chatham_girls/fashion.htm)

<sup>72</sup> According to the owner of Chatham's Goldrush jewellers, (The Chatham Girl's 'place of worship') Chatham Girls were passive dupes: *"a bit too thick to realise they were having the piss taken out of them"* - for buying excessive gold jewellery. The website, perceived as a disgrace by local councillors experienced meltdown in 2001 due to its popularity and discussions in related chat-rooms. For example, [pub36.ezboard.com/fchathamgirlsfrm1\\_23k](http://pub36.ezboard.com/fchathamgirlsfrm1_23k)

<sup>73</sup> It also resonates with the themes of this chapter; the social and cultural links between jewellery worn to excess and perceptions of worth, ideas about aspirations to aristocratic taste by working-class women, the significance of gold and diamonds in triggering an array of significations for working-class women and their critics, the troubling of notions of respectability through working-class women's adoption of Royal Taste a concept I discuss in more detail later, and how classism, racism and sexism are articulated through disdain for fashioning. I have therefore chosen to quote from it at length:

*"The Chatham Girl will always be wearing CRAP earrings. It is something in their genetic makeup that makes them want to hang kilos of tacky shite from their earlobes. Much the same as certain African tribes, it has become a tradition. They will start with small earrings [...] and will with time progress to ones that are just too ridiculous - that have more use as hula-hoops. It is again a hierarchy thing. [...] If you are lucky enough to find a Chatham Girl with earrings that don't actually hang, but rest at a slant on her shoulders then you are in the presence of royalty! [...] The most popular are the Diamonique Dangling Ball earrings. They are a hoop earring that supports a Diamonique (crap, worthless, imitation diamond) ball on the bottom of the loop [...] at least 3 inches in diameter with the ball the size of a marble. These can be worn in ascending sizes down the ear with the largest at the bottom. Chatham girls will display lots of these types of earrings as that's mostly what they spend their money on. Be it dole money, pocket money or proceeds of a Post Office job [...] They are all sad, fashion sheep [...] Chatham Girls will always wear as much gold as possible on their fingers. They think it makes them look sexy. It does in fact make them look like pikeys [...] The classic Moschino Gold Shoe is another trait of the Chatham Girl. They will be worn by either all of the pack at the same time or by none at all. Social standing is measured here on how much she can make people squint with the glare of her shoes [...] This came as a surprise even to us. One of our reporters nearly dropped the camera when stumbling upon this lot. Gold booties for kids. Noooo! We hear you cry. The gold bootie for the up and coming Chatham Girl. Goes nicely to set off the gold that the baby will have been adorned with for the first 3 months of its life [...] The professional Chatham girl will wear an array of gold chains around her neck, from which will dangle a variety of huge gold charms. Her favourite is the CLOWN [...] They appear to show hierarchy within the pack. The bigger the clown the more movement it has and the amount of imitation precious stones it has inset denotes how high the Chatham Girl is in the hierarchy."*

Clearly now part of the vernacular of urban culture the term pikey was interpreted in *The Guardian* accompanied by a full-page comic Roma caricature. The text ambivalently notes: *"Much in use these days as a rather politically incorrect adjective denoting absence of quality, the word 'pikey' is centuries old and comes from the noun 'piker', a 16<sup>th</sup> century term for a tramp or vagrant. The original 'pikeys' were vagrants who travelled the turn-pikes and toll roads - of 16<sup>th</sup> century England. The word still retains the sense of traveller or gypsy"* (Taylor (ed) 2003, no pagination).

The Chatham Girl site is ironically sponsored by a Chatham jeweller, Mr T. (Rowan, 2002, p. 5) In a memo, I noted that the first articulated clown necklace I spotted being worn in Glasgow was on Argyle Street 14 June, 2002. Clown jewellery is now ubiquitous in Glasgow's East End. Other fashioning traits vilified by the website authors included, 'use of scrunchies', 'prison clean' trainers, leather-look coats and sports clothing. The site authors used a traditional guise, that of the artist (rather than the anthropologist/researcher) in order to pass in the Chatham Girls' territory: *"We took a trip dahhhn taahn to a well know shoe shop and took some pics. Posing as 'Art Students' doing a project on gold fashion. Trying not to snigger as we asked the shopkeepers to take pics"*.

<sup>74</sup> In this the authors views could have been influenced by either/both Conservative and subsequent New Labour Governments. Both have been criticised for pathologising young women's sexuality and the demonisation of (female) single parents, leaving this group as one most vulnerable to poverty, ill health and remote from access to employment. Figures published by One Parent Families Scotland showed that in 1990, 70% of one parent families earned less than £10,000 per annum, and since the introduction of the Child Support Agency, a Conservative policy widely discredited as divisive, there has been *"no significant increase in the proportion of lone parents receiving child support"* (<http://www.opft.org.uk/factfile/stats02.html>).

<sup>75</sup> She has noted the irony that later they grow up and reject their 'partnerships' with men: *"When this occurs, politicians indict women further; single mothers are treated like they are the scourges of society. Eventually these women dump men, sue for divorce and decide to go it alone. Such contradictions present a costly picture for women. They suffer for the love of men and*



Examining the Chatham Girls precursor, Cox has noted that Essex Girl “*could certainly be viewed as yet another in a series of historical moral panics around young single women with money to spend, and spending it unwisely*” (Cox, 2000, p. 5).<sup>76</sup> She demonstrates that the Essex Girl’s prototype was established as early as the 1880s when the development of resorts such as Southend and Clacton produced a tension between perceptions of day-trippers and goodtime girls and respectable, middle-class suburbanites. Noting a trajectory of constructions of girl tribes from the 1840s on, she has highlighted common accusations levelled at groups of working-class girls and women in industrial centres across Britain.<sup>77</sup> The perception of Essex representing the “*worst of British rather than the best*”, and where the worst of Essex is the Essex girl is a perception that has endured.<sup>78</sup> Cox’s research illustrated how the construction of Essex Man and Essex Girl, through broadsheet and tabloid media, was built on recurring themes and references to fashion(ing) and consumption “*satellite dishes, shell suits, gold jewellery, Mitsubishi shoguns*” (Cox, 2001, p. 3).<sup>79</sup> The trope of cheap, gold jewellery also surfaces in Cox’s delineation of the social objections to Essex Girl: “*Although Essex Man was certainly ridiculed for his consumer preferences (Capri’s, Topman, lager) it was the Essex Girl who bore the brunt of what has become a systematic and highly gendered denigration of the mass, the cheap, the popular or, as Gerald Ratner might put it, the crap*” (ibid. p. 8).<sup>80</sup>

Cox has defined the social response to Essex Girls as ‘The Sociology of the Sneer’,

One of the things that Essex Girls have done for us culturally is to expose the myth of the classless society and the myth of the sexually equal society in a way those [Essex Girl] jokes, they are funny but they are also having a good sneer at a certain type of white trash woman in a

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children”(Greer, 2002). Criticising New Labour, Greer asserted that it was wrong to rage against teenage mothers: “*as if they were ram raiding and creating a vast crime wave*”(Greer in Chrisafis, 2003, p. 5).

<sup>76</sup> Cox has traced how the Essex Girl was conceived by *Telegraph* journalist Simon Heffer as an electoral vehicle, (Essex culture epitomising Thatcherism) and as a girlfriend, sister or daughter to Essex and later Mondeo Man. She sees Essex Girls’ predecessors as Lancashire mill girls of the 1840s, munitions girls in the first World War, the ‘Docklands Degenerates’ of the 1930s and the “*good time girls of the 1950s*” (Cox, 2001, p. 5). Coincident with the creation of Essex Man and Girl, Essex became synonymous with mindless excessive materialism, and the association remains. In a satirical article promoting the joys of Essex, Morton dubbed Posh and Becks “*The patron saints of Excessex*” (Morton, 2003, p. 20).

<sup>77</sup> “*All were attacked for their immorality, for their vulgarity, for their sexual laxity and for their frivolous spending on cheap clothes and cheap entertainments*”(ibid.).

<sup>78</sup> (see for example, BBC, *Women’s Hour*, 16 October, 2001)

<sup>79</sup> Essex Girls became a name a national figure in the winter of 1991-92 almost exactly a year after the creation of Essex Man. It followed the 1980s US version of the caricatures: Valley Girl, the Bimbo and blonde jokes (Cox, op.cit., p. 4).

<sup>80</sup> Some 20 years after the construction of Essex Girls the recuperation of Essex’s legitimacy, jeopardised by its association with such disreputable women, was initiated in 2001. However, for the broadsheets, there was still scope in 2003 for mining the Essex Girl myth. In his *Independent* article in 2003 ‘The joy of Essex: cash, flash and footballers wives (oh and some jolly nice countryside)’ Cole Morton, himself “*a resident of white stiletto Essex*” made a mocking defence of the mythical land of *Footballers Wives* and *Essex Wives*. The extent to which mainstream broadcasters empathised with the message of Essex Girls jokes can be measured by the fact that the BBC had eventually to ban its staff from emailing them. Significantly, Cox suggested that criticism of BBC for this action, on the ground of sexism ‘*helped to shape what has since become known as ‘new laddism’ that new form of elite humour, which uses irony as a defence against changes of sexism*’ (Cox, 2001, p. 6). A *Woman’s Hour* piece, ‘Whatever happened to the Essex Girl?’ (BBC Radio 4, 16 October, 2001) included the views of a local councillor who had launched a website to try to restore the reputation of the area and downplay the Essex Girl mythology.

In contrast, Greer has criticised the demonisation and alluded to the dissidence of Essex Girls: “*Her existence and her style make nonsense of the Labour rhetoric about “social exclusion”. She does not see herself as outside society; she sees herself as belonging to the real world of family loyalty, sexual unpredictability, underemployment and petty crime, and the Blairs as pious, condescending and self-deluding. I think she’s great*” (Greer, 2001, p. 8).



way - in America you might call it that - and they are laughing with her but they are also laughing at her in a kind of a way, so I think some kind of examination of what's going on there, why we are not comfortable with this kind of woman (Cox cited in *Woman's Hour*, 2001).

Just as working-class women who fashion to excess have been perceived to have tainted the marketability of areas of Britain, over the same period, working-class consumption of jewellery was interpreted as contributing to the undermining of the economic legitimacy and symbolic status of gold itself.<sup>81</sup> In its recruitment of ballet star Darcey Bussell to represent the campaign to re-brand gold, the World Gold Council were reinforcing a message about desirable middle-class femininity and appropriate displays of jewellery that has historical resonances in the literature intensely targeted at women in the post-war period; the promotion of *acceptable* forms of fashioned feminine excess set against a disdained model of Black and minority ethnic working-class excess.<sup>82</sup>

### Appropriating forms of working-class women's (jewellery) fashioning to excess

Class domination does not just touch the working class, but is central to the fantasy structures and defences of the bourgeoisie (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 37).

The appropriation of working-class stylisations of excess by high fashion and middle-class taste from the mid-1980s on was acutely ironic and can be understood as an aspect of broader themes in post-punk fashion and design, and post-modern art prevalent in this period of *bricolage*, the queering of excessive femininity and the knowing, disingenuous celebration of camp and kitsch. Far from attempting to confer authorship to the frequently anonymous makers of so-called low objects or images or connoisseurship to their non-ironic, traditionally working-class consumers, the post-modern makers' and stylists' relationship with low arts was an internal dialogue, a Duchampian purloining of ready-mades, ostensibly to revivify High Art by introducing the shocking spectacle of the prosaic, feminised and domestic into its orbit. The work's effectiveness depended on it being recognised as, and

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<sup>81</sup> Honigsbaum reported that "after 20 years in the doldrums [...] gold is being re-branded as the must-have metal [...] After the collapse of the gold standard in 1968 and the decline in gold prices since the 1980s – aided by jeweller Gerald Ratner's 'total crap' comment of 1991 and gold's association with rappers and gangsters – the WGC (World Gold Council) believes the image of gold is tarnished, hence the re-branding campaign." (Honigsbaum, 2001, p. 24).

<sup>82</sup> "Last year the WGC hired [Darcey] Bussell to show off its designs submitted for its Gold Virtuosi awards at Goldsmiths hall and followed it up with an American print campaign featuring full length photos of a laughing Bussell under the tagline 'Gold Fashioned Girls'. According to the WGC its aim was to target young female executives with a household income of \$75,000 + - not the sort of women in other words [who were] wiggling their butts, Jennifer Lopez style at a Puff Daddy concert." (Honigsbaum, 2001, p. 24). Two years later, reflecting on whether the Gold Council's campaigns have worked *The Guardian's* Sophie Radice noted that "It so happens that Laura [a forty year old lawyer who lives in London] and I are exactly the sort of middle-class women in their 20s, 30s and 40s at whom the World Gold Council's \$4m autumn advertising campaign, 'Speak Gold' is aimed" (Radice 2003 p. 6). But continues to find it too 'ostentatious' for her own taste.





46. Chanel advertisement, *Vogue*, early 1980s.



Versace advertisement, *Tatler*, November, 2001, Volume 296, Issue 11, unpaginated.



remaining, vulgar.<sup>83</sup> This mock affection for the degraded excessive and the overblown pastiche of working-class and women's taste is mirrored in developments in fashion from this period. Now seamlessly woven into mainstream fashion, punk can be seen as precipitating this ironic turn. In the field of jewellery, the work of an American designer working some twenty years earlier was also a significant precursor.<sup>84</sup>

By the 1980s, adopting vulgar excess in parenthesis had been promoted vigorously in campaigns by couturiers including the erstwhile bastion of classic modernist good taste, Chanel. Whereas Lane's references were eclectically gathered from the jewels of the social elite,<sup>85</sup> Chanel's post-punk collections hinted at a movement towards play and appropriations of what were perceived to be elements of working-class style. In subsequent decades the spectacle of excessive, ironically worn jewellery, referencing (working-class) costume jewellery or street style precedents became ubiquitous, fuelled by the mining of black music stars' ghetto fabulous uses of jewellery in the last three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>86</sup>

The appropriation of unauthored working-class fashionings was unequivocally led by the couture fashion houses.<sup>87</sup> Despite their popularity, the fashion excesses of Cavalli and Versace had, until the late 1990s been deemed insufficiently self-mocking and ironic to be adopted by the British middle class fashion cognoscenti.<sup>88</sup> Dolce and Gabbana's work was frequently read as bosomy or

<sup>83</sup> The work of artist Jeff Koons exemplified this 'New Vulgar'ity'. Dormant wrote of Koon's early work: "*The collectibles were the sort of wood or porcelain novelty items and 'collectibles' sold on American daytime TV to women with big hair living in trailer parks. Koons had them enlarged by European master craftsmen, making them, if possible, more hideous, more outrageously camp than the models on which they were based*" (Dormant, 1994, p. 18).

<sup>84</sup> In 1962, when Kenneth Jay Lane began working, costume jewellery had dubious, that is working-class connotations. Jewels were symbolic accessories worn only by the wealthy, Lane's shocking departure was to induce the upper classes to don costume jewellery "*What made the [Lane designed] jewels so unusual was the fact that costume jewellery at that time was, in Lane's words, 'jewellery to be given to the maid' – He made costume jewellery desirable in the highest echelons of society*" (Becker, 2001, p. 11) From the outset, the post-modern tone in Lane's oeuvre is apparent. Appraising his career Becker wrote that his flamboyant, faux jewel collections were originally designed to be worn "*by his young, female, socialite friends, several at a time, with tongue in cheek opulence*" (ibid.).

<sup>85</sup> Chiefly copies of pieces owned by the Duchess of Windsor.

<sup>86</sup> Identity bracelets, multiple ring wearing, two and three finger rings or 'Dukie's', charm bracelets and nameplate necklaces were used by celebrities and stylists and reproductions proliferated in high street fashion outlets, but somewhat ironically the cultural gulf between high and low retailers, products and consumers remained polarised. Style journalist Sherwood illustrates this in a piece that focuses on the bourgeois appropriation of all things naff "*Funky Soho boutique Shop is selling out of the gold 'name' necklace beloved of Shazzas and normally found at Argos*" (Sherwood, 1999, p. 1).

<sup>87</sup> The excess in couture fashions from the 1980s on was widely attributed to the fashion hegemony of Italian designers. Miranda Levy heralded the rise of 'The New Vulgar'ity' in fashion, where: "*style setters [were] embracing vulgarity with total abandon*". She noted of Robert Cavalli's 2001 show, that "*Shameless vulgarity reigned supreme. In New York, front row occupants among them Puff Daddy and Busta Rhymes sported white fur and diamonds. This is the New Vulgar'ity, the 21<sup>st</sup> century trend where more is more and excess is again a measure of success*" (Levy, 2001, p. 19). Cavalli has been dubbed the 'King of Bling', and the Cavalli aesthetic "*cash-addled high-class hooker sensibilities...extravagantly sleazy nouveau bling*" (Vernon, 2003, p. 18). I discuss bling later in this chapter. The work of Versace, Dolce and Gabbana and Moschino was frequently cast as a foil to the preppy, WASP hegemony of American designers Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein from the late 1970s and the minimalism of Japanese couture characterised by Issey Miyake, and Commes des Garçons.

<sup>88</sup> Compared to excessiveness of British designers. Westwood and Galliano's excesses are permitted on account of their transparent playfulness and post modernity against which Moschino's wit is perceived as laboured and more readily bootlegged. The understated Prada and Armani are relatively feted. Their vulgarity was inferred in critiques of Muicca and Gianni Versace and their opulent lifestyles. After Gianni Versace's murder, the *Independent* covered the auction of his estate. In an article entitled 'Gianni Versace presents the car boot sale of the century', (Walsh, 2001, p. 3) Walsh suggested that "*Only the most*



meretricious, having at its source “*the sartorial style of the Southern Italian matriarch*” (Mulvey and Richards, 1998, p. 197). Cavalli’s clientele was similarly vulgarised in broadsheet critiques, but, as demonstrated here, his excesses could be rescued, by the knowing and ironic inventiveness of ‘fashion folk’:

At his womenswear shows it is not unusual to see his fans – Milanese women of a certain age – kitted out like their daughters: all big blonde hair and treacle-coloured skin, proudly sporting the full Cavelli regalia at two in the afternoon. [...] It is not only on the back of every big rock, pop and rap star, from Madonna to Mary J Blige [...] but strangely fashion folk – traditionally the most resistant of all to colourful, busy clothes. A pair of wildly embellished jeans or a brightly printed chiffon shirt is now considered *de rigueur*, worn ironically with a clapped out school blazer and a pair of scuffed high heels (Lowthorpe, 2001, pp. 25-28).<sup>89</sup>

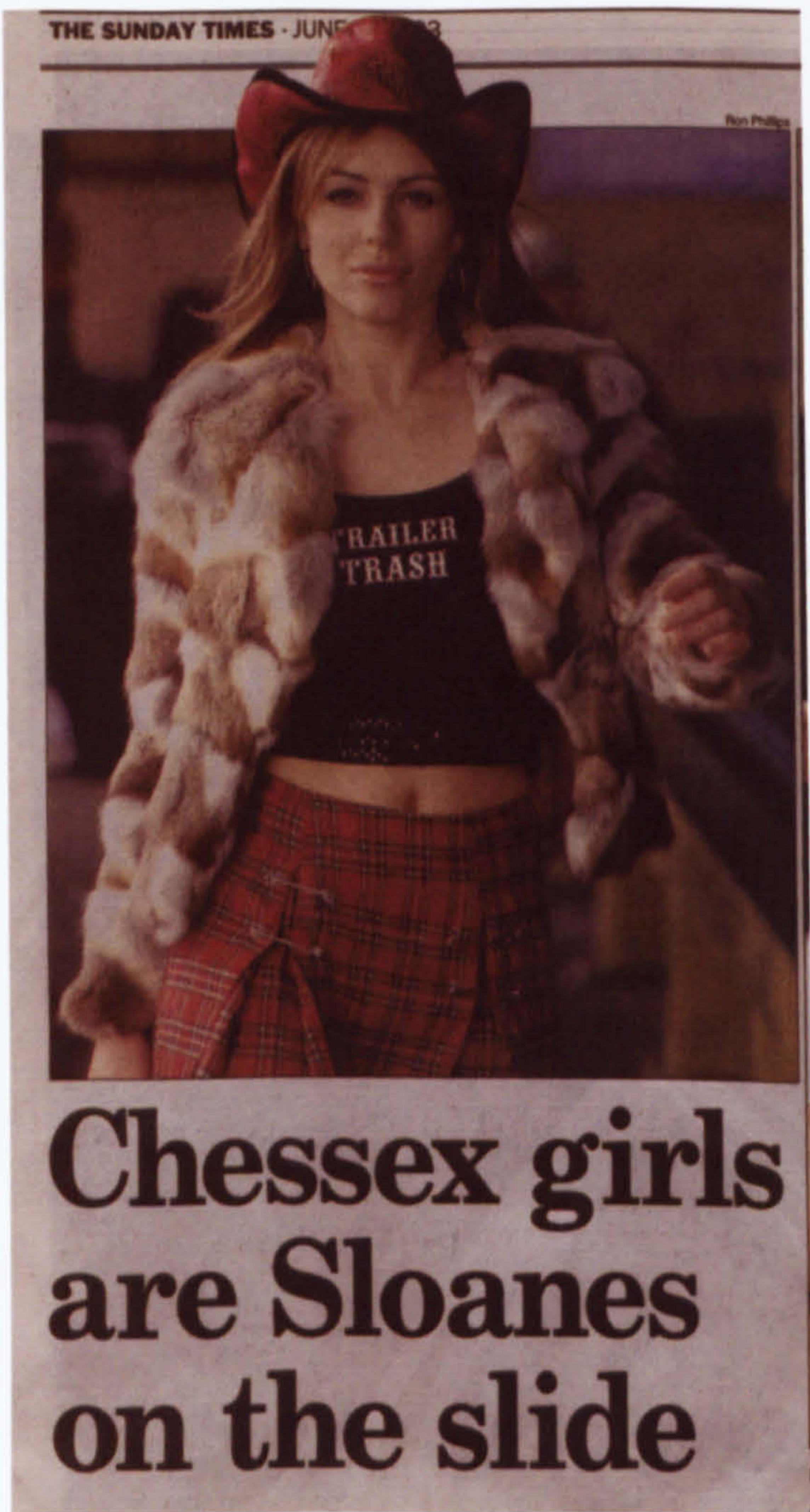
The widespread popularity, appropriation and bootlegging of Italian designer goods, typically distributed through market trade further vulgarised the Versace and D&G brands and lent justification to the bourgeois anxiety about such expressions of excess and the style cognoscenti’s disaffection for them. In contrast, the high fashion industry’s mock affectionate referencing of working-class and Black fashion excesses appeared to be transparently a joke at the expense of the culturally unenlightened. Given the significance of fashioning in the demonisation of working-class women, high fashion designers and consumers play with such signifiers was fraught with risk. However disingenuously the appropriations of working-class fashionings were dressed up to appear celebratory or homages, the glossies made it apparent that there were dangers in the proximity of such styles to the original source. In an *Elle* feature in March 2001 ‘Return of the Beauty Queen’, Jan Masters deftly homogenised naff references for readers, and emphasised the artfulness involved in creating these pastiches. In contrast to the anonymity of the originator’s of this look, their take was conspicuously authored. Guido, the most successful celebrity hairdresser post 2000, and Masters were careful to point out the risks of emulating the raw, disdained original too closely.<sup>90</sup>

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*outrageously well-heeled, extravert and derangedly flamboyant punters and fans need turn up*”. Observer journalist Lowthorpe has described Cavalli’s style as the “*slag-luxe fashion choice of the footballer and footballer’s wife*” (Lowthorpe, 2003, p. 16).<sup>89</sup> Lowthorpe also deployed here the notion of fashion matter out of place implying that the aware would know that it was only appropriate to wear Cavelli after dark. The article’s title, ‘Happy Cavalli’ – evoked the ambivalent model of the prosiness of the domestic and the seaside town/resort.

<sup>90</sup> “Along with makeup, Orlando wanted to do brassy, brash hair: ‘*I thought about bad perms but the idea was just too horrible, so I decided to weave in streaks instead to make it look like a bad dye job*’. Good call. [...] Oh and the make-up. Fred Farrugia painted on sugar pink eye shadow and fuchsia lipstick, and Odile Gilbert went Carmen-roller crazy with the hair, scooping it all to one side and lacquering it to death [...] Daniel Sandler, make-up artist stated ‘*The beauty queen [...] typifies a particular kind of attainable, girl-next-door glamour. You know, how a Romford hairdresser would look on her wedding day.*’ But after several seasons of perfectionist chic, and with all due respect to Romford, do we really want to head towards naffness? [...] According to hairstylist Guido most women will get it, ‘*The vulgarity isn’t meant to offend – women really are confident enough to understand*





47. Liz Hurley fashions trash in ‘Chessex girls are Sloanes on the side’, *Sunday Times*, June 1 2003, page 3.



The formula for fashioning trash, *Elle*, March 2001, page 274.



By the late 1990s the appropriation of white, working-class excessive fashioning had been distilled into the epithet, 'Trailer Trash'. In July 2002 *Vogue* attempted to define and endorse this look. The feature is baldly disingenuous in its avoidance of reality, of what happens to the female working class who attempt to move into positions of power whilst signalling trash, and perpetuates the strain of Modernism that exoticises the working class.<sup>91</sup> Restating the Cinderella motif, Bethan Cole claimed: "*Glam white trash or GWT is a knowing take on what trailer park girls wear when they marry a millionaire; white and gold, tight and sexy. Think Dolly Parton meets Britney Spears. At the moment it feels like it is taking over the world*" (Cole, 2002, p. 38).

The feature promoted products that either pastiched, mimicked or rehashed (retro) forms of cheap popular products and fashions whilst "*Tight clothes and jewellery [summed] up the style*". The products aped a working-class trash/habitus with two critical differences insulating ironic consumers from the source; this trash was endorsed by designer authorship and was reassuringly costly.<sup>92</sup> Cole makes her case through her deployment of 'snapshot scenarios'. She casts herself as an undercover agent suggesting that 'Trash' was a sought after look located at the style cutting edge, that is, endorsed by stylists and Sarah Jessica Parker.<sup>93</sup> Cole emphasised the knowing irony of the look as a form of dressing-up, by attributing its creation to the young British style aristocracy: "*GWT began as the whiplash style gesture of mid-nineties fashion rebels. In Hoxton around 1997, dressing up like a lap dancer from a Georgia trailer park was the height of chic. Artist Sue Webster, designers Stella McCartney and Phoebe Philo and a legion of Dazed and Confused stylists evolved the Look*"<sup>94</sup>. She

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when fashion is playing with pastiche. They know they can just take what they want from it – make their hair fuller or flirt with a more sexy look" (Masters, 2001, p. 168). Note here the slippage 'women' used generically but meaning *Elle* reading cognoscenti.

<sup>91</sup> The strap line stated "It's a small step from trailer park to Park Avenue, says the American Dream. Glam white trash style is inspired by those who make the trip".

<sup>92</sup> 'Flash Your Trash' showcased products including Agent Provocateur lingerie (bra £75, briefs £38), a gold and diamond lucky horseshoe necklace (£1,250) and a gold plated charm necklace by White Trash Charms (from £100) The article was literally framed by personalities deemed to embody appropriate forms of trashiness including white rapper Princess Superstar, "*a fan of glam, white trash style*" and Britney Spears "*a star from the Deep South*", alongside 'trash exponents' Kid Rock and Pamela Anderson. For further discussion about the historical and popular cultural, race and class issues surrounding the origins and use of the terms 'white trash', 'redneck' and the demonisation of white working-class Southerners in modern US history see: Neal and Gregory, 1997, p. 230, Reed, 1997, passim, Campbell, 1997, passim, and Chadwick, 1997, p. 263.

<sup>93</sup> "Some snapshots from the theme park of glam white trash style. Saturday morning, Camden market: a stylist for a well-known TV presenter rifles through a rack of shoes. She has clumsily streaked long blonde hair with a heavy fringe, and wears baggy jeans with red cone heels and a milkshake-pink hoodie, 'Look, how Vegas are these?' she exclaims, lighting on a pair of white cowboy boots festooned with gold chains. 'Pure glam white trash!' [...] Sex in the City is on Channel 4. Sarah Jessica Parker swings through uptown [...] She's wearing hacked off, bleached denim hot pants with a tight, white halter neck and a sliver of gold ankle bracelet" (ibid. p.38).

<sup>94</sup> The mythical trailer park aesthetic assumed to be at its source has recently been critiqued by a writer who grew up in America's Deep South. Noting the 'sick' proliferation of trailer trash fashions in London's trendy Shoreditch Carrie Gibson writes: "There seems to be some sort of assumption that these unfashionable poor people have chosen to live in a house on wheels [...] to wear tacky clothes, to have out of date hairstyles. But here we choose to don a costume of poverty because we can afford to [...] Why stop there? [...] Maybe a war zone look. Or refugee chic? [...] What next: an ironic dinner party serving up Red Cross rice?" She predicts the return of the 'scally craze' or "*white trainers, gold jewellery and a shell suit... council estate chic*" (Gibson, 2003, p. 26).



# ELLE girl

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boudoir into an  
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**WHEN**

**STYLE QUIZ**  
How fashion  
fabulous are  
you really?

**KELLY  
MET  
MANDY...**

**'Friends are so important'**

Kelly Osborne and Mandy Moore, cover, *Elle Girl*, Spring, 2003.



made clear that white trash were not the originators, Britney and Pamela Anderson et al were unconscious, their style discovered and interpreted through a British bourgeois lens.

[In the heady early days in Hoxton] It felt like a game as much as a fashion gesture: who could find the most repugnant and revolting taboo of trailer park America and turn it into an emblem of cool.? [...] GWT was a rebellion against a surfeit of good taste; a style in-joke with the perpetual punch line 'that's so bad, its good' (ibid. p. 39).<sup>95</sup>

Other popular but upmarket fashion magazines promoted the 'Trailer Trash' look including *Elle*. In a fashion feature in Spring/Summer 2001 the author attempted to fuse Trailer Trash with an Essex Girl/British Seaside Town/Goodtime Girl formula and restated British designer influences in constructing the look.<sup>96</sup>

The so-called porno look that originated in the wake of the trailer trash vogue represented a further commodification and marketing for middle-class consumption of a style associated with working-class women. The *Tatler's* Summer Lichfield stated, 'Get the porno look', in the November 2001 issue. In a characteristic simultaneous invoking and disavowal of the template for such highly classed looks, the tabloid and gossip magazine glamour model Jordan both heralded as the inspiration and disdained. Lichfield legitimated the appropriation in her own trend setting scenario.

Another Thursday night at Attica and the girls are gathered round their table. Same faces, same chitchat, but amid the hair, heels and lip-gloss, there is a new greeting: 'Babe! You look so porno!' To say she looks porno is suddenly the highest compliment you can pay a girlfriend.

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<sup>95</sup> In an attempt to claim trash as a British phenomenon Cole stated that, "In the UK, two TV dramas, *Footballers Wives* and *Cutting It*, have made the lives of Essex girls and hairdressers compulsive viewing". In perhaps in the most implausible link, Cole found significance in the fact that: "Julien Macdonald, a designer of sexily ostentatious clothes from our very own Midwest (socially deprived South Wales) is installed as head designer at Givenchy" (Cole, 2002, pp. 38-39).

<sup>96</sup> "The hottest holiday destination this summer will not be St Barts, St Tropez or St Lucia. If John Galliano [British designer] has his way everyone will be staying at mother Ivy's caravan park in Cornwall, to fit in with the Middle-American trailer trash-cum beauty queen trend so prevalent on the catwalk. Just don't forget your white stilettos, bleached denim miniskirt, string vest and tarty hairdo..." (Elle, unattributed author, 2001, p. 23).

A punk Trailer Trash offshoot was promoted to more affluent girls and young women through the glossy *Elle Girl*, sub-title, 'for girls who like to shop'. In the Spring 2003 issue, cover stars Kelly Osbourne and Mandy Moore discussed achieving the Prom Princess look complete with mock tiaras (Hughes, 2003, p. 30-34). Mock tiaras became ubiquitous amongst middle-class young women attempting to achieve a 'New Vulgar' look after Courtney Love first wore one with heavy irony and a vintage nightie in the early 1990s, however, more recently tiaras were appropriated as a less ironic, more Royal/Vulgar Taste accessory by Victoria Beckham (discussed later in this chapter). Tiaras have been a component in mass produced girls' dressing up kits since at least the early 1960s. An elaborate contemporary manifestation of their continuing popularity can be witnessed in the dressing up/Coronation/crowning/photography ceremonies enacted in Girl Heaven stores. Post-modern fashioning has recruited the concept of vintage as opposed to the discredited nostalgia. The offsetting of vintage with contemporary generates an illusion of disinterest in fashion. Consequently, Osbourne's look "is a cute cornucopia of designer covetable, vintage finds and homemade punk-trash trinkets" (ibid. p. 33). Feminine excess is advocated within the frame of knowing, ironic eclecticism. These fashioning approaches promised to confer a degree of individuality even intelligence, as they simultaneously pastiched and critiqued the spuriousness of fake glamour. Osbourne's ostensibly innate post-modern eclecticism was highlighted. She rehearsed the *Vogue* perspective that non-ironic performances of feminine excess were inappropriate compared to a knowingly fake, queered play with excess "I like drag queen make-up, but not like Christina Aguilera!... To my prom I wore a scruffy pink frilly vintage dress and then stuck pink rhinestones all over some Puma trainers to match" (ibid.).



Martin Kidman, picking up the club's tacky chic chose [Spearmint Rhino lap dancing club] as the venue to show his last collection. [...] Jordan [...] in all her top-heavy, G-string-flashing, pouting glory, has become our favourite, if unlikely, new style icon. [...] you don't have to go the whole hog like Jordan – in fact, it's really not advisable. But there is no harm in toying with the trend (Lichfield, 2001, p. 74).

The erasure or homogenisation of the original prom princesses, lap dancers, prostitutes, pole dancers, brides, beauty queens, glamour models and black and white trash is critical to the reinvention and discovery of such exotic but low styles by named designers and members of the self-appointed rock aristocracy.<sup>97</sup> Burchill has noted that whilst working-class women drew the wrath of broadsheet and Internet journalists alike, they were frequently the authors and originators of lucrative forms of contemporary popular culture.<sup>98</sup>

### Beauty Queens – disdained, queered and appropriated

Working-class women dominate a spectrum of disdained media and popular cultural fields and genres as Walkerdine (1997) has discussed; beauty queens have been arguably the most scorned outside the sex industries.<sup>99</sup> The demonisation of forms feminine excess elaborated in and for working-class cultural consumption and their paradoxical appropriation by middle-class audiences, fashion, media and beauty industries is illustrated in their recent ironic reclamation.

The Miss World competition was a hugely popular post-war British TV broadcasting phenomenon. The beauty pageant model that had expanded into a global phenomenon by the end of the twentieth century has generated a divergence of cultural, social, anthropological, religious, collective and personal interpretations, and is one of the few popularly understood foci for Western feminist criticism, arguably one of the principal reasons for its (the contest's) virtual extinction in Britain.<sup>100</sup> The

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<sup>97</sup> Or a representative of both in the case of Stella McCartney.

<sup>98</sup> "Strangely the very bits of popular culture such journalists worship and make a reasonable living from – fashion, beat music, smart-ass TV – come from the working classes too. It is the middle class commentators, not the Kittens or the Big Brotherettes who are the parasites" (Burchill, 2003).

<sup>99</sup> Some would argue that this is but another facet of sex work.

The frequency of prostitution, brothels and meretricious fashioning being appropriated, idealised and commodified in the art, music and fashions of the upper and middle-classes is too broad a subject to chart in this thesis, however, some left commentators from the 1950s on have identified this theme in opera, film and popular music forms, for example, Newton notes "Among the more rebellious minorities, mainly of intellectuals and artists [...] the milieu of gangsters pimps and prostitutes [...] was simply more heroic, free, innocent and in its roundabout way, just, because it was one of outcasts and protesters against social convention. In terms of jazz, jazz is good music because it is believed to derive not simply from Negroes but from the red light district of New Orleans" (Newton, 1959 p. 265).

<sup>100</sup> Ballinero Cohen et al demonstrate the spectrum of political, social and cultural meanings of pageants globally, that resist a specific reductive analysis (Ballinero Cohen, 1995). The competition retains the capacity to trigger the mobilisation of communities in international contexts. The event planned for Nigeria in 2002 was re-located to London after three days of rioting and the death of over 100 people after clashes between communities in the Christian South and the mostly Muslim North who were objecting to the Lagos based *This Day's* article that suggested that Islam's founding prophet would have chosen a wife from amongst the contestants (Asthill, 2002).





49. Julie Goodyear, Miss Britvic, in *Queen of the Street*, Sally Beck, 1995, unpaginated.



crowning ceremony an iconic apotheosis, was undertaken with the gravitas and attention to protocols that characterised the staging of Royal events in the post-war period.<sup>101</sup> Although for British audiences it came to exemplify a rare validation of forms of feminine excess, naturalness is figuratively alluded to throughout the highly formularised event format.<sup>102</sup>

Although it had American precursors, The Miss World Contest was conceived by Eric Morley, an entrepreneur of British post-war popular entertainment.<sup>103</sup> The format proliferated in holiday camps, social and sports' clubs, factories, festivals and fairs.<sup>104</sup>

Notwithstanding a feminist critique of the events as engineered spectacles for the male gaze, an empirical perspective suggests that for some participants and female audiences alike Miss World licensed unrivalled identification with and performances and consumption of forms of elaborate, fashioned femininity, and for some, a route to fame.<sup>105</sup>

Winning amateur beauty or talent competitions was also literally associated with glittering prizes. Aspiring Mancunian actor Julie Goodyear took this route to escape factory bound drudgery and single parenthood in the 1960s. Goodyear entered many contests and started modelling in an effort to get noticed and make money.<sup>106</sup> Her biographer Sally Beck noted "*She accepted the crown and sceptre for Miss Astral, Miss Langley Football Club and Miss Aeronautical Society*" (Beck, 1995, p. 77).

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<sup>101</sup> Although I argue here that beauty queen excess has been appropriated and queered the programme itself has resisted the camp hegemony that has infected swathes of British popular culture to include the queering of Eurovision and even the notion of historical decades; The Sixties, The Seventies and The Eighties. A significant difference in Royal and Beauty coronations is in the televisually satisfying surfeit of emotion in the climax of the ritual of the latter.

<sup>102</sup> The paradox of artifice and naturalness is also at the root of the American pageant. The early promoters, sought to present their contestants as "*natural and unsophisticated [...] their publicity stressed that none of the entrants wore make-up or bobbed their hair – symbols of 1920s modernity*" (Watson and Martin, 2000, p. 117). In 1938, Claire James was denied the crown because it was discovered that she had worn mascara (ibid. p. 108). The focus for significant actions by feminists in US and Britain in the early part of second wave feminism, Watson and Martin have noted of pageants that "*one of the great paradoxes of American women's history is that the pageant was first held in the same year that women were allowed the vote*" (ibid. p. 107).

<sup>103</sup> A quasi-traditional annual event, it remained embedded in British working-class popular culture until the twenty-first century. Asked to create an event to publicise the Festival of Britain. Morley, who also introduced commercial bingo to Britain, was also the creator of *Come Dancing*.

<sup>104</sup> Butlin's holiday camps, attracting millions of working-class families annually across Britain held Holiday Princess competitions nationwide from at least the start of the 1960s (Herald, 2001, p. 25). Elizabeth remembered coming second in a "*Miss Something or other contest... It was a youth club beauty contest at 16, it was youth club, Doncaster Youth Club beauty queen and I certainly didn't feel equipped at all you know there were girls at the Youth Club who were very skilled at making themselves beautiful but I had no skills at all you know I wasn't practiced in any of those things and I just do not know why, you know, I certainly didn't feel beautiful at that point, not attractive even, but I was persuaded by you know, [Laughter] these, my pals at the Youth Club to go in I was pushed into it basically...*"

<sup>105</sup> Walkerdine has claimed that singing and dancing are also amongst the narrow number of fields where working-class girls can imagine an escape to fame, talents "*from which they have not automatically been excluded by virtue of their supposed lack of intelligence or culture*" (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 50). Winnie's experience of working on the elaborate fairy tale hair fashionings of Miss Universe contestants in Miami in the mid 1960s remained a cherished memory, and her account conveys the allure of glamour for some of the young women associated with the event "*it was like being on the set of a movie*".

<sup>106</sup> Her character in *Coronation Street*, 'Bet Lynch' was also given a similar history, born in 1940, 'Bet' (Nown, 1985, p. 49) was a local beauty competition winner. In 1955 she became Miss Weatherfield (Little, 1993, p. 29).





## Who would win the POP Miss World Contest ?

Every year, without fail, more than half the population of the British Isles watch the Miss World contest on television. It's been described as "like a cattle market" but no matter—the fuddie-duddies can have their say while the rest of us tune in and watch.

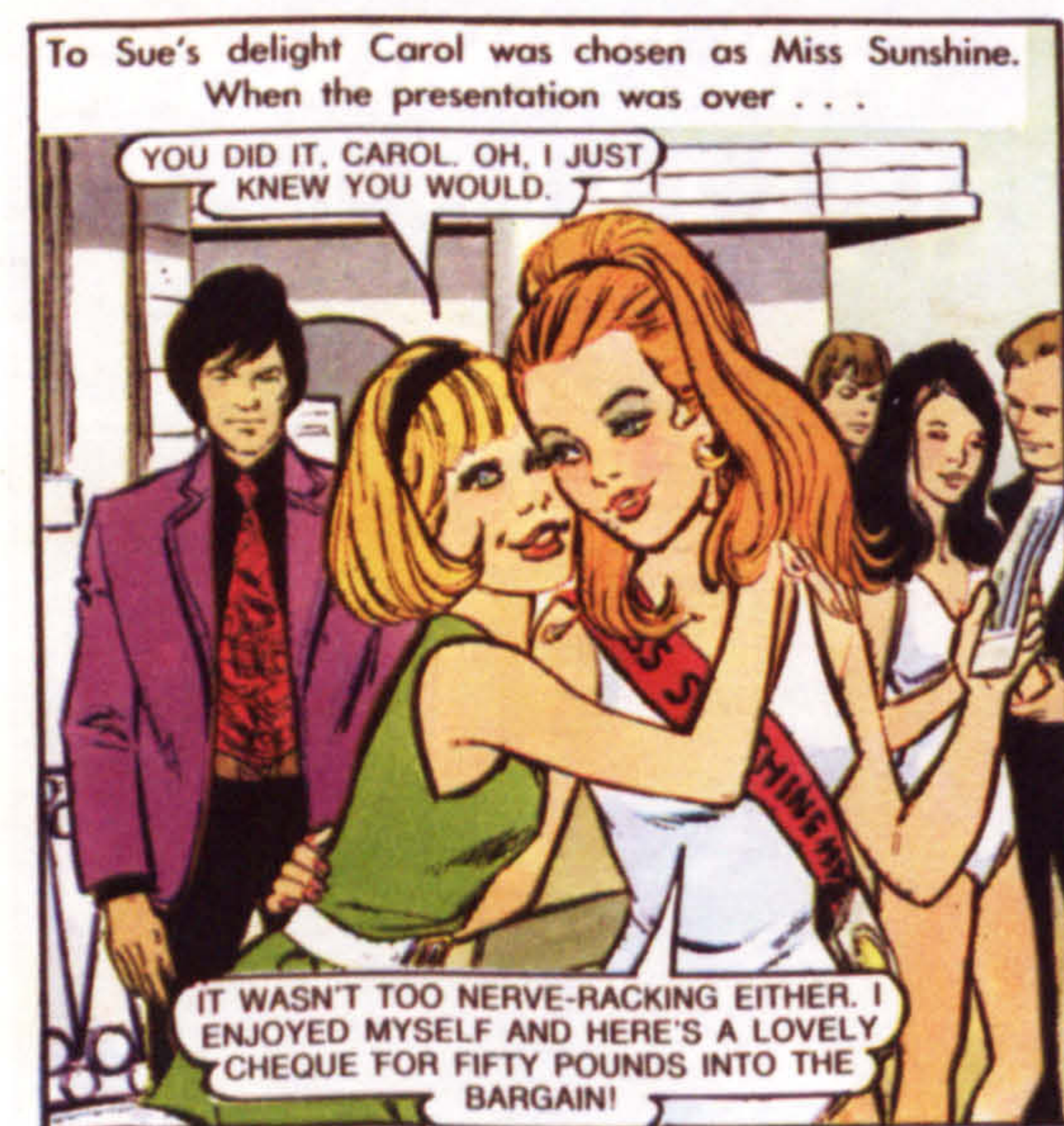
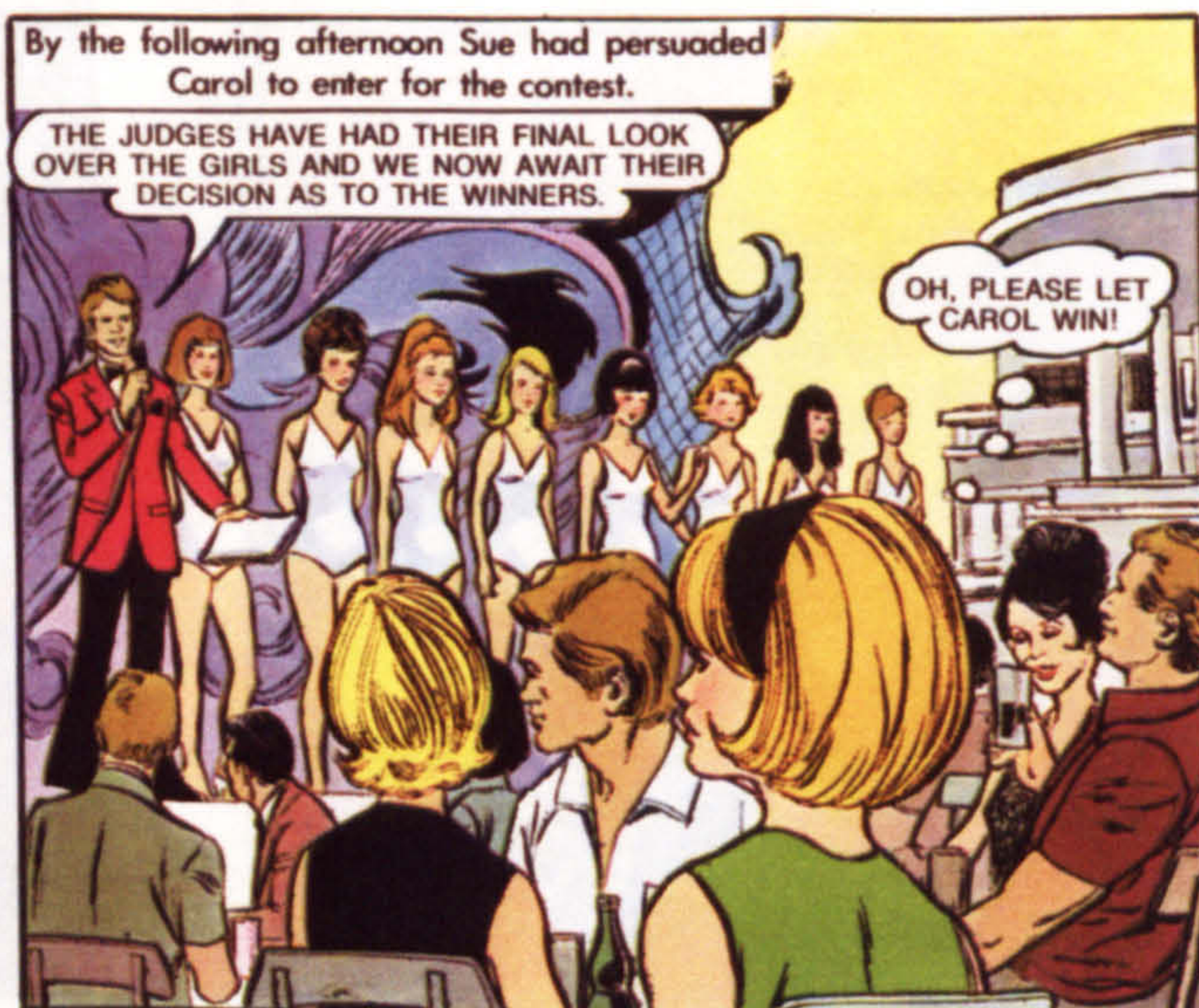
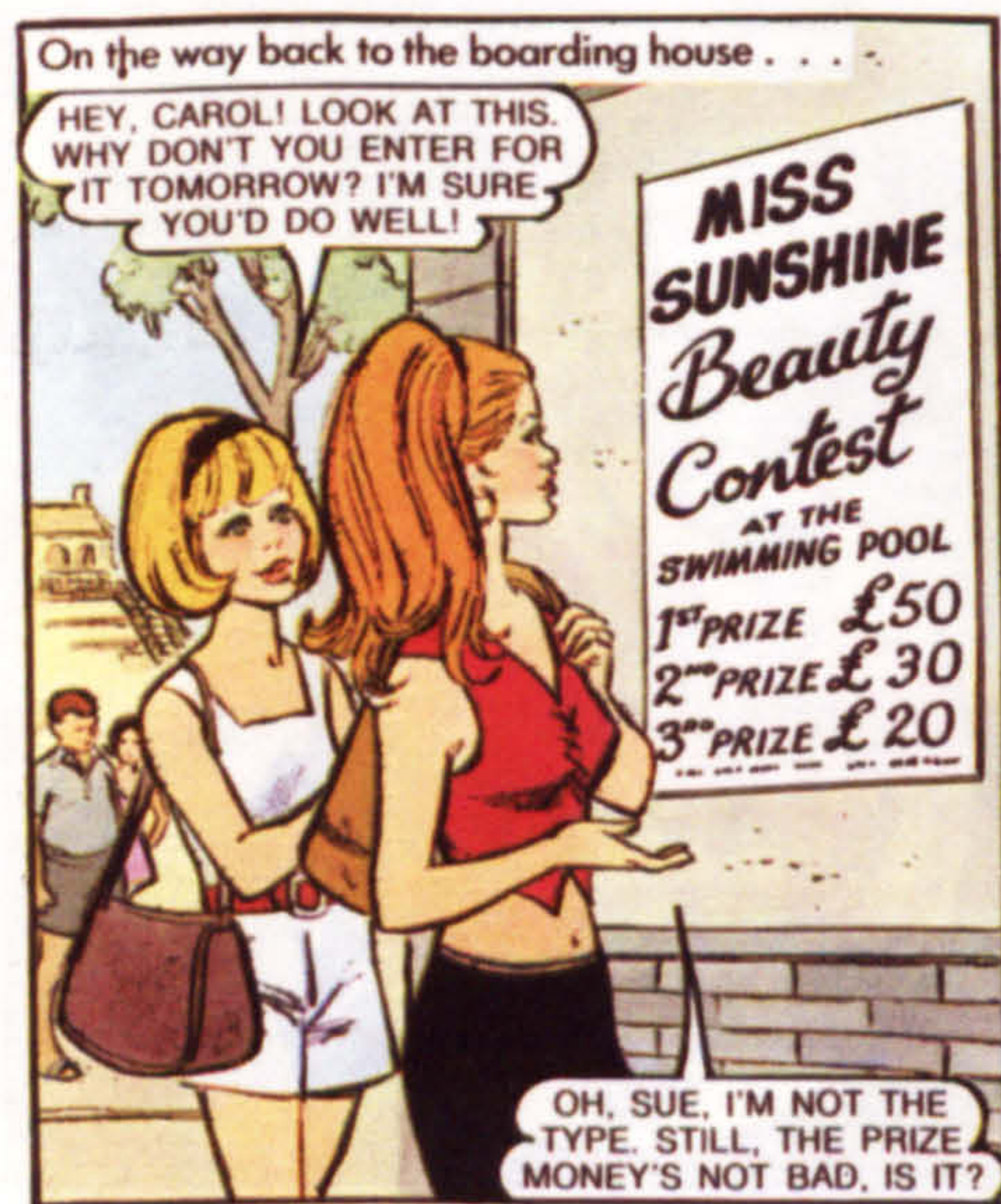
But supposing the Miss World contest was restricted only to girl singers . . . then who would carry off the title? An intriguing thought, says I. And at the risk of being torn limb from limb, I'll put down a few personal thoughts.

First, let's say that some of the world's finest singers are by no means pretty to look at. But then again, some of the prettiest girls are by no means good to listen to. With these excuses in mind, let's explore a little . . .

How about Nancy Sinatra? The dynamic American is around the thirty mark now, but the years don't show. She has one of the best pairs of legs in the business—I can testify to that because I've interviewed her several times and she was always in the tiniest of mini-dresses. She also has a tremendous personality, bubbling away like a Dresden cauldron. She'd come high in the world ratings.

But what about our own Lulu—a girl who crashed into the pop world with a record "Shout" but has since (a) got married and (b) found maturity







In Goodyear's early competition training the alchemy for a specific form of excessive and glamorous femininity, with somewhat audaciously regal undertones was absorbed. A local weekly paper noted an early success in 1965 when Goodyear was 23.<sup>107</sup>

By the 1970s, the Beauty Queen construct had been absolutely imbricated into British popular culture and was referenced in an array of girls' texts.<sup>108</sup>

The influence of the first British Women's Liberation demonstrations at the Albert Hall Contest of 1970 is imperceptible in these texts. Feminists had disrupted the proceedings with rattles, stink bombs, tomatoes and flour-filled balloons. Historian Sally Alexander, a demonstrator arrested on the night has claimed that it was not the beauty contestants that were the focus for the action:

The demonstration was not against the contestants at all... that's an important point. For the young women who wanted to enter a Miss World contest, it was a way out, it was exciting, it was fun – that was their choice. It was Mecca's activities we were opposed to. As we were arrested and dragged out, we bumped into the contestants, most of whom were very nice to us, and said, 'let them alone, they're only having their say' – that kind of stuff (Wood, 2001, p.1).

Any potential for dialogue between feminists, beauty queens and the Mecca management were subsumed by political and business expediencies and the action became canonised as a symbolic feminist ideological confrontation; of the conscious versus false-consciousness, of feminine artifice

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<sup>107</sup> "A week's royal treatment in one of Blackpool's leading hotels began last Friday for model Miss Julie Goodyear. Besides VIP wining and dining, she will be guest of honour at a late night ball – all part of her prize for winning the 'Miss Britvic' contest. [...] Julie won the title, in the face of competition from fifty other models from all over the country, all trying for the glittering first prize, which, in addition to the week in Blackpool, includes a substantial amount of money and an evening dress. During her week in Blackpool, Julie paraded through the streets on a float wearing her sash and crown, and wore the evening dress, Grecian-style in white tricot, at the ball" (Heywood Advertiser, 23 July 1965 cited in Beck, 1995, p. 76).

Goodyear also invested in a course at the Manchester branch of the Lucie Clayton modelling agency, her conduit to stardom in *Coronation Street*. Pam Holt, the manager of the Northern branch when Goodyear attended has stated: "In those days to go on the [fashion or beauty] catwalk you had to learn how to take your hat off, how to model with an umbrella, how to take gloves off and how to use your hands. At the end of the course you graduated at a fashion show" (Holt in Beck, 1995, pp. 78-79). This reflects the advice in Clayton's *World of Modelling and how to get the London model-girl look* (Clayton, 1968). Arriving at her interview "plastered in make-up" with a beehive hairdo and wearing a tight short skirt and red stilettos Goodyear later claimed: "I wanted some of the rough edges knocked off me" (Goodyear quoted in Beck, 1995, p. 78). Bourdieu has read the existence of 'charm schools' as inherently classed where working-class girls are taught to radically transform their ways of walking, talking, sitting laughing, smiling, dressing etc. (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 206). Beck notes: "The northern branch was different to the London establishment, a finishing school which taught shorthand and typing, cooking and deportment and grooming to daughters of the middle-class". According to Goodyear's contemporary Carolyn Beck "It was a find-yourself-a-husband-school". Lucy Clayton's in Manchester concentrated on training girls with ambitions to model (Beck, 1995, p. 78). They provided Granada Television with extras where Julie got her first breaks (Beck, 1995, p. 84).

<sup>108</sup> For example, the *Pop Weekly Teenbeat* annual, of 1971 asked of Dusty and her contemporaries, 'Who would win the Pop Miss World contest?' In the comic strip 'She's a Super Looking Sister' from the *Diana for Girls* annual of 1973 The Miss Sunshine Beauty contest held in the cheap holiday destination Southsea provided a route for orphaned Carol and her sister to escape poverty through further contests and modelling work. Unscrupulous contest organiser George Moore attempts to exploit Carol financially but she is saved from becoming vain and spoilt by a car accident, subsequent facial scarring and the ministrations of handsome Doctor Reid after which she becomes a hospital beautician working to build the confidence of other facially disfigured patients. Walkerdine has discussed how the fictions and fantasies played out in the comic book stories for girls are class specific and "run counter to middle-class girls' expectations and assumptions about girlhood" (Walkerdine, 1997, p. 51). She noted the prevalence of orphans in this genre, "It was amazing just how many of the stories [in an examination of girls' comics from the 1970s] presented their heroines as orphans [...] Poverty then, remains understood as cruel and oppressive circumstances in which cruel people exploit and oppress poor orphans who are rather left to struggle alone against this oppression" (ibid. p. 47).



52. *Diva's* queered queens:



Writer and DJ Valerie Mason-John began dubbing herself 'Queenie' around the time of her hosting of the Lesbian Beauty Contest, 1999, featured on the cover of *Diva*, January/February, 1999.



Parminder Sakhon and Poulomi Desai, the 'queens of British Asian photography' featured on the cover of *Diva*, September, 2002.



indicted by the natural woman, the exploited versus the liberators.<sup>109</sup> This germinal feminist protest was understood by the left as a repudiation of sexism articulated as a form of both feminine excess and working-class consumption of popular culture. In the early 1970s a notion of femininity in crisis was forged where a dyad of attitudes was represented in both left media and feminist texts; a rejection by feminists of a working-class form of feminine excess on the one hand, and a *volte-face* by some gay men, from a political rejection of camp as a pejorative identity to an almost ironic assertion of camp and drag as a gay male prerogative.<sup>110</sup> From the 1980s, queer ironic play with kitsch, camp and feminine excess became the default gay political position, conceptualised and validated in academic work and personified by a heightened visibility of (gay) male (popular) arts and media personalities playing with drag.<sup>111</sup>

*Diva*, the first glossy British lesbian lifestyle magazine, contributed to the queering of beauty queens through its extensive promotion and coverage of the Lesbian Beauty contest. Launched in 1997, the contest ruptured further the divide between lesbian feminists and their opponents.<sup>112</sup> *Diva* had been launched three years earlier during the white heat of media interest in so-called lipstick lesbianism. The title, *Diva*, unlike its predecessor *Sappho* was consciously referencing camp appropriations of feminine excess. Although ostensibly rejecting the reductive anti-fashioning rhetoric of the second wave, *Diva* sustained through its regular fashion spreads and advertising a modernist, feminist and punk/queered

<sup>109</sup> Julia Morley, now the competitions' producer has said of the demonstrations: "*I had a lot of sympathy for Women's Lib... the only thing that I found very difficult was that they didn't actually come to see me or talk to me. At the time, I was actually very much involved and trying really hard to change things, but it takes time*" (Wood, 2001, p. 1). Although the political views of specific contestants have increasingly been made visible (a number boycotted the 2002 Nigeria event in protest at the sentencing of stoning handed out to unmarried mothers), feminist protests against the competition continue to occur in global contexts. A male feminist activist immolated himself in a protest against the competition in Bangalore in 1996 (Mann, 2001, p. 15).

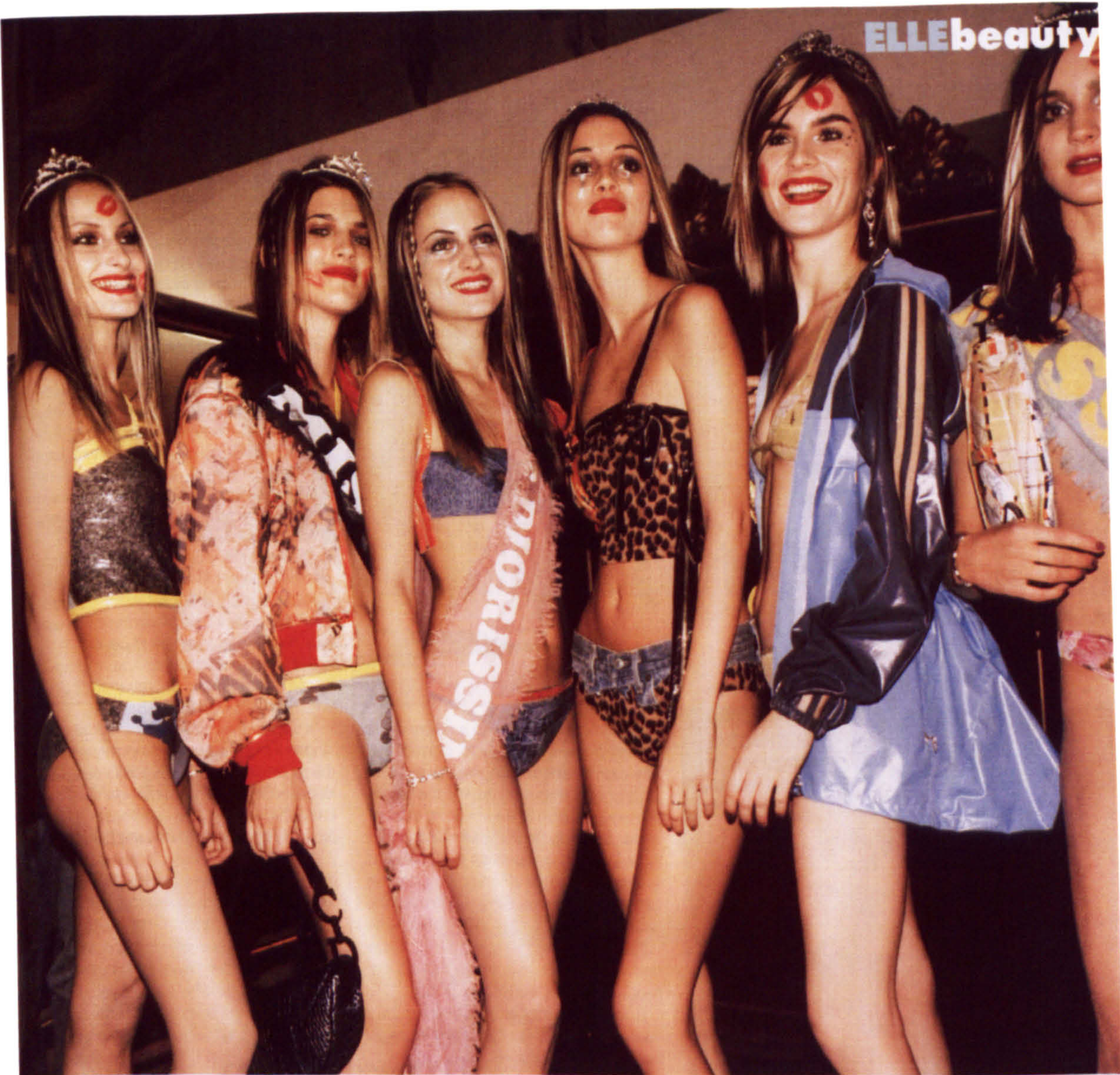
<sup>110</sup> Assisted by and informing the feminisation of mainstream pop culture typified in the fashioning of bohemian forms of feminine excess by Bowie, Bolan, Ronson, Slade etc.

<sup>111</sup> For example: Michael Clark, Lily Savage, Julian Clary, Leigh Bowery, Boy George, Marilyn, Pete Burns, Eddie Izzard, Elton John, Steve Coogan, etc.

Alternative, annual pageants infused with a parodic, ironic and queer sensibility proliferated following artist Andrew Logan's precedent, the Alternative Miss World, established in 1972. Logan has claimed that "*The model was not the Mecca Miss World but the Crufts Dog Show*" and reflected through a somewhat queered nostalgia that "*gender became ambiguous and reality dissolved at the edges*" (<http://www.alternativemissworld.com>) The alternative, spoofed beauty pageant was even dramatised in an off-Broadway theatre production, *Pageant*, in 2000. In his review Michael Billington criticised the saturation levels of camp on the London stage by the end of the twentieth century: "*The reason that Pageant [...] palls after a while is that, having struck camp, it has nowhere much to go. It parodies the tacky vacuity of beauty pageants by casting men as the rival contestants. [...] The first night the prize rightly went to Leon Maurice Jones as Miss Industrial North*". His critique fuses anti Americanism: "*we are rapidly turning into a cultural colony of the US*" and an anti excess, pro-realist stance: "*While spoofing beauty contests the show clearly delights in their tasteless décor, their absurd pretensions, their innate chauvinistic competitiveness [...] on such evenings I find myself yearning for the unironed reality and the oxygen of authentic passion. Camp is undeniably part of theatre, but if it becomes the whole part then you get hermetic enervation. Better I'd have thought, the grim reality of the kitchen sink than the self delighting mockery of sinking kitsch*" (Billington, 2000).

<sup>112</sup> Political debates had proliferated from the birth of the movement for example, the status of butch and femme identities – these are positively promoted in the contest (awards are given to Miss Butch, Miss Femme, etc.) but intensified and proliferated in the wake of gay men's precedent in playing with gender signification. The media's unabated delight in the notion of lipstick lesbians and the promotion of so-called lesbian chic reaching saturation point in 1994, fuelled antagonisms further. The epithet Lipstick Lesbianism ironically highlights a former contradiction in terms. The sources for lipstick lesbianism are extensive and ongoing but see for example, Briscoe 1994a passim, Sue O'Sullivan, 1994, O'Kelly 1994, Briscoe 1994b, Hamer and Budge, 1994





# RETURN OF THE BEAUTY QUEEN

Dig out those old Carmen rollers, beauty queen glamour is back on the runway and on film. Jan Masters asks the experts how to carry off that tiara

**T**he sash. The sceptre. The crown. The tears. The flashlights. The swaying hips. The trembling lips. Those white stilettos. OK, I admit it. I was mesmerised by Miss World when I was a little girl. I adored that surreal swimsuit parade – a conveyor belt of fixed-grinned Barbies, all dressed for the beach, but with their hair and feet dressed for the office. I was riveted by the voiceovers telling us Miss Tahiti was 36-24-35, and a botany student with a talent for fire-eating, and

that Miss Iceland, 35-23-35, was an air hostess but in her spare time trained penguins to work with the blind.

But most of all, I loved that drum-roll of a moment when the winners were announced in reverse order and the cameras swung backstage to watch the Queen Of Global Loveliness plucked from the huddle of Miss Didn't-Quite-Make-Its. Gasping at her good fortune, she was shown to her throne, crowned and kissed by some dodgy old ➤



inspired taste.<sup>113</sup> The queer queen theme was evident in *Diva's* fashion features and cover images, for example, 'All Jubileed Out', to coincide with the Queen's Golden Jubilee, an image that reprised a punk, anti-Jubilee aesthetic and rhetoric with a nod to contemporary fashion's obsession with pageant trash. These new Queens were also strongly referencing their identification with male drag queens precedent in line with the widespread relinquishing of authorship of feminine excess to gay men.

The phenomenal popularity of camp for media audiences from the 1990s followed in the wake of the reappropriation of excess by queer communities.<sup>114</sup> A queered stance on feminine excess, camp and kitsch became widespread and was inflected in British and American broadsheet journalism.<sup>115</sup>

Nowhere is the artful, ironic appropriation of beauty queen excess in the queered *fin de siècle* more obsessively at work than in fashion journalism, again evident across an array of British publications. In his article, 'Pageant Provocateur, beauty parades are fashion's new fascination', John Davidson wrote:

Such flesh-fests are a recurring inspiration for the great Italian designer duo, Dolce and Gabbana. And John Galiano has plundered their iconic paraphernalia of title sashes, coronets and entrant numbers (together of course with the obligatory skimpy swimsuits) for his radical overhaul at Christian Dior. Yet these designers are not striving to legitimise beauty pageants. The genres trashy glitz and kitsch has simply provided a starting point for runway shenanigans [...] the glitzy kitsch epitomised by the American beauty pageant circuit is just another rich seam of iconic and ironic materials for designers to mine (Davidson, 2001, p. 11).<sup>116</sup>

The excess of the other is simultaneously demonised, in its original unconscious state, and fetishistically extolled in the designer's discovery and recovery of it for ironic purposes.

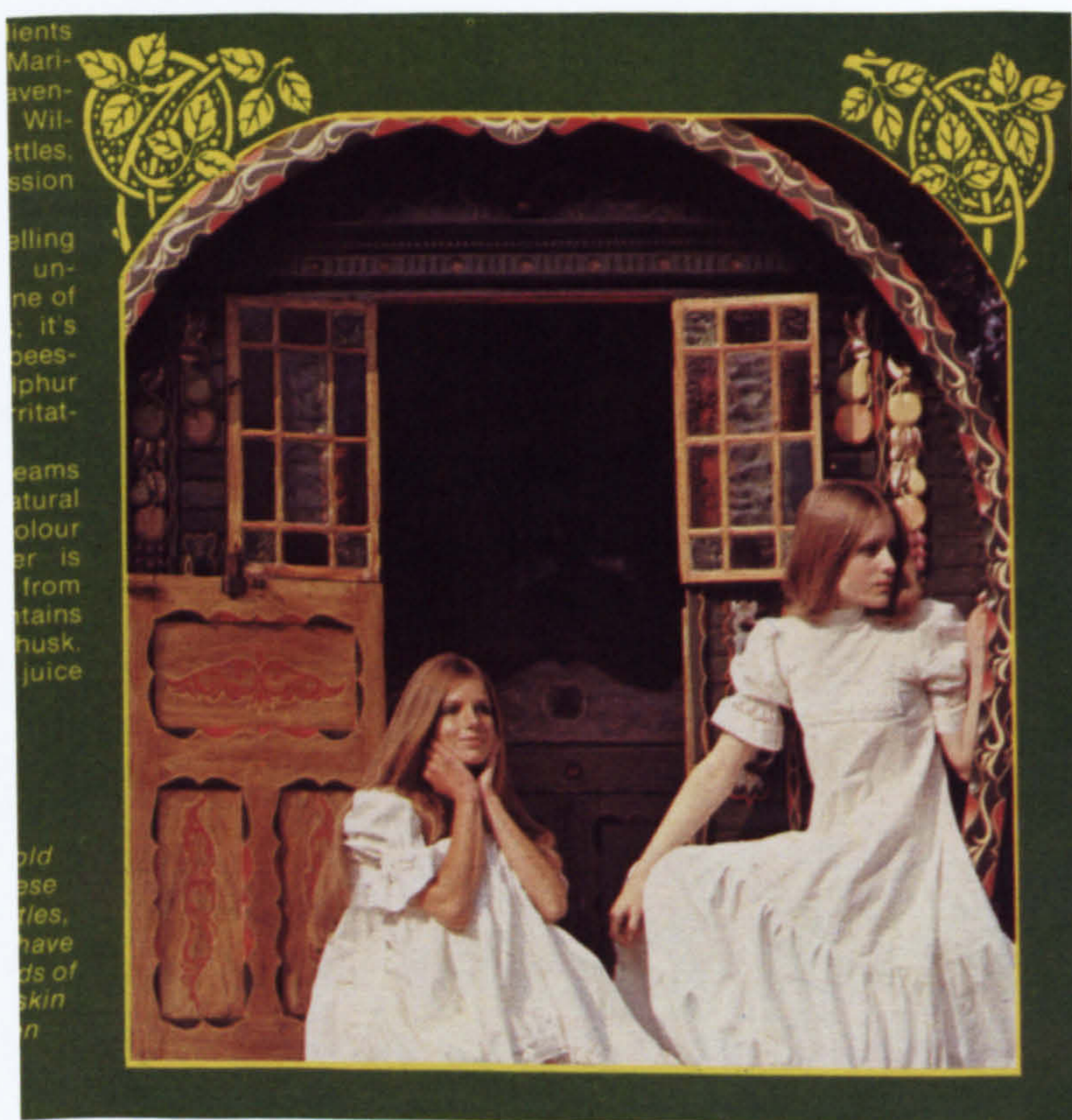
<sup>113</sup> For example, in an issue entitled, 'Shopping till she drops', the writer asked, 'What do Diva dykes want for Christmas – we've chosen a few things and four lesbian stereotypes to help you with your list making: 'Politically correct lesbian', 'urban lesbian', 'leather and lace lesbian' and 'rainbow lesbian'.' The model, modelling each stereotype wore for each shot the same sleepers and stud earrings and silver pinky ring with the exception of 'rainbow lesbian' where she wears a rainbow rings necklace. (Gill, *Diva*, 1998, pp 30-35)

<sup>114</sup> Some stars crossed seamlessly from the drag queen circuit and gay venues and clubs to mainstream television in this period for example, Lily Savage aka Paul O'Grady, Amy Lane, Julian Clary.

<sup>115</sup> Corliss's *Time* article on the Miss America Show, cited in the Literature Review is indicative. "It's gaudy, it's fake, it's live! We hate it, we love it!" (Corliss, 1995, p. 123). Vicky Allen illustrates in her review of Miss World for *Scotland on Sunday*, that the tone had percolated by the late 1990s into the Scottish broadsheets. After mock-guiltily confessing that she used to beg her parents to let her stay up late to watch it on TV she stated: "The Miss World contest seems just an empty, shagged-out, irrelevant, old-fashioned slip of a girl [...] to gain popular appeal, it really needs to Eurotrash itself, get a little bit brassy, introduce a few more silicone implants" (Allan, 2001, p. 19).

<sup>116</sup> In *Elle*, Masters also confessed a fascination with Miss World as a girl: "But I grew up. And pageants only survived in places like Crapsville, Arizona [...] There is however a law of fashion that says if you give anything enough time and space it can morph into something romantically retro or deliciously kitsch (I'm thinking padded shoulders, corset belts, fringing ruching and rar-rar skirts) [...] So if you listen very carefully this summer you'll hear the faint clack clacking of court shoes [...] at Dior trailer trash met tiara trash in a riot of cheap frills, oversize fishnets, prints, patent leather and itsy bitsy denim detailing. And to add to the backcombing, backstabbing atmosphere, low slung stained sashes identified who was a 'winner' and who was a 'loser'. The losers bless 'em cried silver tears, painted on by Pat McGrath, who also plastered the cheeks of the winners with congratulatory lipstick prints" (Masters, 2001, p. 168).





54. Illustration from 'Think natural' in *Girl! Girl! Girl!* annual, 1974, page 54 and 55.



Illustration from 'Ken Rodway, a sort of male model', in *Fashion Model* annual 1971, page 20.



## Appropriating the feminine excess of others

The ambivalence of this fascination is evocative of the paradigms of Modernism's relationship to others. Beauty Queens, porn stars, glamour models and other trash are exotic precisely because they are viewed at a cultural remove. The exoticisation, demonisation and appropriation of caricatures of white working class women's fashioning resembles in part the paradigm of racist othering. The phenomenon of demonisation and appropriation of Black and minority ethnic fashioning is linked to this chapter's central themes, expands discussions on the meanings of contemporary jewellery and is inextricable from discussions of popular culture and fashion in the post war period. White bourgeois fascination with fashioning otherness is pervasive in the history of fashion and design from the 19/20c *fin-de-siecle*.<sup>117</sup> In the memory work generated for this project and in extracts from participants' contributions the fascination with Black and minority ethnic otherness was apparent. Jean's self-consciously arty, aspirational fashioning of herself and her home reflected the tastes of her grandmother and much loved, middle class father. Her tastes reflected specific aspects of middle-class consumption and mythologizing of otherness.

Yes, I mean, I've always been influenced by Japanese, American Indian, North American Indian you know, like jewellery, Egyptian, all that stuff has always influenced me and I love silver and I love the way it's crafted you know, so it means something to me, I don't know what it is about it, but it does something to me, it gives me a really nice feeling, it's really nice to wear.

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I didn't have an awful lot of jewellery when I was young, it - when, when I got into my teens and that, that's when I started to develop - my father was very much influenced by Japanese and Indian - it was him that influenced me in Indian Art and like, also he used to burn joss sticks in the house.

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<sup>117</sup> From Japonism to the Paisley shawl, from Nancy Cunard's negrophilia to hippy chic, from the vogue for Polynesian tattooing and Hawaiian shirts to St Laurent's appropriation of Cossack costumes (see, for example Craik 1995 pp. 17-44). Extensive (memory) work to chart the significance of social and collective constructions of otherness in memories of the body or the fashioning of others has yet to be undertaken. In work for this project an array of significant texts were generated: "*A fantasised that her mother was Spanish. The cues for this were her Mum's 'gypsy earrings' and black, crocheted, 'Spanish shawl'. This fantasy guaranteed pleasure. A had relished the decoration and detail that characterised her best friend Shaheen's fashioning and home. Shaheen's Mum wore Indian gold jewellery, including a nose piercing and saris although she was white. A thought the Indian women movie stars seen on trips to the Asian cinemas in Bradford with Shaheen's family were the epitome of glamour; thick hair and encrusted with jewellery*". Significantly, Bollywood has been queered and appropriated as camp.



Although vogues for fashioning otherness have been triggered by specific moments in colonial history Modernist tastes for indigenous or native jewellery have endured.<sup>118</sup> White, Modernist taste has adopted a host of black muses, models and performers from Josephine Baker's iconic precedent in the early 1900s.<sup>119</sup> Bohemianism and romantic identifications with others is evident in play with exotic fashionings, interiors and lifestyles/habitus from at least the late nineteenth century<sup>120</sup>. A renewed bohemianism, and a romanticised gypsy aesthetic resurfaced in both fashion and feminist literature from the 1970s on.<sup>121</sup> It linked the aesthetics of British uber boutique Biba, aspects of the styling of *Spare Rib*, the Body Shop (and feminist entrepreneur Anita Roddick herself) and other forms of feminist and mainstream taste. The exoticism of Ossie Clark and Zandra Rhodes couture also paved the way for the mainstreaming of ersatz gypsy fashioning to girl readers through comics and annuals.<sup>122</sup>

Although the post 1970s hippy/gypsy aesthetic settled into a form of classic left, liberal uniform, the past two decades have generated a proliferation of versions of bourgeois play with paradoxically retrospective and new forms of exoticism appropriated from outsider cultures.<sup>123</sup> In 1996 the writer Dea Birkett "*a faint hearted south London feminist*" was the focus for an *Observer* article after she won a Winston Churchill scholarship to join the Italian circus Americano.<sup>124</sup> Firmly in the mould of bohemian precedents Birkett offered the reader news from an exotic, othered place. Fore-

<sup>118</sup> For example, the discovery by French Impressionist painters of Japanese prints, or Post Impressionists of Polynesia, the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb, the expansion of British trading interests in India and China have given rise to design, architecture and fashion vogues and trends. Francis Newton discusses the significance of exoticism in the development of audiences for jazz in white 'official' culture: "*In so far as jazz has been absorbed by official culture, it is as a form of exoticism, like African sculpture or Spanish dancing, or the 'noble savage' types of exoticism by means of which middle and upper-class intellectuals try to compensate for the moral deficiencies of their life, especially today when they have lost the nineteenth century confidence in the superiority of that life*" (Newton, 1959, p. 17).

Wearing ethnic jewellery appears still to be one of the few conscious concessions to adornment permitted to the culturally attuned, Modernist influenced, middle-class consumer. In an article rather anxiously charting the recent proliferation of men's jewellery, Charlie Porter noted that a survey of his *Guardian* colleagues found only wedding rings, and one solitary simple hoop earring worn in a left ear. Further research only came up with a confession of "*occasionally wearing the odd hippy bracelet*" (Porter, 2001, p. 5). Oliver Bennett also adopted a confessional mode and set his own circumspect tastes in jewellery against, the "*sheer eye-popping vulgarity*" of David Beckham, concluding "*That's all very well but what about the dandy rather than the fop? What can he wear, that is actually tasteful? Here I must confess to being a ring wearer. One was a gift and is one of those Native American rings with turquoise in it, it must be convincing because someone in a new age shop saw it and asked, 'are you on the Shamanic path?'*" (Bennett, 2001, p. 8).

<sup>119</sup> The extent of Baker's impact is illustrated by Rose amongst others (Rose, 1990).

<sup>120</sup> For an illuminating history of the notion of Bohemianism see Wilson, 2002, *passim*.

<sup>121</sup> Arguably influenced by or influencing the style of Joan Baez, Julie Felix and other folk heroines. In the *Star TV and Film Annual* of 1968, Julie Felix, from Santa Barbara, was introduced as 'a modern minstrel' in the exoticised Modernist frame: "*There is a Spanish gypsy look about her. Those bright brown eyes the lovely olive oval of her face, the black silky long hair. Somehow a guitar and folk song go with that picture*" (Long, 1986, p. 56).

<sup>122</sup> In a typical spread, from *Girl! Girl! Girl!* entitled 'Think Natural' models were posed on an anachronistic caravan, in tin baths and by haystacks. The text advocated a return to 'natural beauty' and the 'discovery' of 'natural' beauty products: "*Gypsy remedies with nettles, herbs and natural ingredients have been handed down for hundreds of years and Gypsies were using skin tonics long before other women found them useful*" (Dennis, 1974, p. 56). Another article from the same publication provided an a-z of, 'recipes for natural beauty'. (Usden, 1974, pp14-16) and promoted the use of health food stores whilst recommending "*natural beauty you can buy*" from expensive ranges including Mary Quant, and 'Beauty Without Cruelty'.

<sup>123</sup> The gypsy and hippy styles have common characteristics, both more indicative of middle-class cultures. Sandy noted of her colleagues in counselling: "*I mean, like in the counselling circles things are more relaxed and anything goes you know and you do get a lot of people in sort of counselling circles who are sort of as one of our customers put it 'hippified', 'Oh those hippified lot.' you know...*"

<sup>124</sup> She toured Sicily in a caravan she bought for the trip.



grounding the feminist disapprobation she caused due to her showgirl fashionings.<sup>125</sup> For Birkett this was a play with identities, a performance of otherness. Inevitably, she conceived this from a queer perspective where, notwithstanding the coaching and support she received from female circus co-workers, she compared her experience to that of gay men “*compromised was exactly how I wanted to feel. It was so much fun impersonating a woman. I felt as subversive as Lily Savage*”(ibid). The appropriation of (mythical) working class, ethnic and other fashionings and lifestyles by high fashion and new bohemianism is also exemplified in the Gifford’s travelling circus project. In an article ‘High Flyers – what do models do when they’re sick of the catwalk?’ Tamsin Blanchard, fashion editor of the *Observer* claimed, “*They swap labels for leotards and run away to the circus.*” (Blanchard, 2000, pp-27-29).<sup>126</sup> In some measure, the fashionability of circus performers and showgirls in this period was due to the agency of camp and queer appropriation. Whereas untitled, unfashionable women’s involvement in this work was merely sleazy, it could be rescued by ironic, camp appropriations as Stuart, has suggested: “*Most modern images of showgirls – kitsch throwbacks in ostrich plumes, or hitting new depths of Hollywood dross in the eponymous Paul Verhoeven movie – have been camp at best, sleazy at worst*” (Stuart, 1996, p. 8).<sup>127</sup> The paradoxical allure and fear of others, frequently articulated in the percolation of outsider fashioning into couture and mainstream fashion was expressed in participants and other commentators’ memories of Barras habituées and enduring perceptions of so-called Barras tart excess. Jack McLean’s memories of the Barras in the 1950s reflects some participants’ perceptions.

Frankly I was a bit scared of it, the raucous traders, the derelicts and the drunks, the tarts and their gaudily –clad pimps. The dreadful poverty about, high-coloured women with their pinched faces right out of Orwell, or women older than their years, fat with cholesterol, rough

<sup>125</sup> “*My friends are generally appalled that I became a showgirl, conniving in such sexist posturing, ‘didn’t you feel, well, compromised?’ asked one, peering critically at a photo of me in my spangly, scant costume*” (Birkett, 1996, p. 6).

<sup>126</sup> She notes: “*Giffords has some of the poshest and most glamorous curtain girls in the business. For the Cotswold season it is the turn of another Storm model, Lydia M to take responsibility. [...] And Edwina, another of [stylist] Isabella Blow’s young protégées has also had a stint on [model agency] Storm’s books*”(ibid.). Edwina’s comments suggest that neither vocation or desperation had driven her desire to work in this field: “*It’s such a romantic idea, the costumes and the fantasy. Now I think I want to work as a cowgirl in Texas*” (ibid. p. 29). Blanchard described how Oxbridge graduates, couture models and/or members of the minor aristocracy created Giffords. The troupe included Iris Palmer: “*cousin of fellow model turned student Honor Fraser and niece of Lord Glenconner. Her mother is a member of the eccentric Scottish Tennant dynasty. Iris was an international model, posing for fashion shoots in Vogue*” (ibid. p. 27). The Gifford’s fairytale has been embraced by other broadsheets, since it rehearses a collective bourgeois fantasy. Nell Gifford, the circus proprietor and author of two books on the subject is cast as the unlikely heroine: “*Circus life is known to attract creative misfits, freaky perfectionists, and under funded athletes. Certainly not pony-mad, Catholic educated Oxford graduates who have lived idyllic childhoods in the English countryside*” *The Observer* has recently promoted Gifford’s diversification as restaurateurs (Diski, 2003, p. 49).

Inevitably, the fantasy of cowgirl life was incorporated into couture fashion by Spring 2001. The style, glitter, fringes, stitching and sequinned stetsons, referenced the feminine excess of low popular US TV singing cowboy shows (French 2001 p. 10). Its endorsement came from Madonna who chose the look, and thus simultaneously signalled its imminent fashion obsolescence, for her *Music* album and video of 2000.

<sup>127</sup> In a familiar move, she inferred that female showgirls have been unwittingly aping male performances of femininity: “*A drag queen before the term was invented, the showgirl at once highlights women’s sexual power and reduces it to burlesque.*” (ibid. p. 9) The most influential of the Hoxton style aficionados Katy England fuelled the drive towards play with erotic dancing, famously persuading her friends Kate Moss and Stella McCartney to pole dance for the cover of *Dazed and Confused*.



roustabouts with sideburns and quiffs, sleekit looking men in expensive suits, spivs: it was Derby day by Frith. I'm not kidding about the harlequin and his little girl. They were there at the opposite end to prince Abadou, a massive African who. Being the first black man I had ever seen, frightened me a lot. He sold –yes there really was such a product snake oil (McLean, 2001, p.1).<sup>128</sup>

Barras traders and travelling people can be said to have occupied a liminal position *vis a vis* whiteness. Dyer has discussed how 'white' is a category that is "*internally viable and unclear at the edges*".<sup>129</sup> For some participants, including Ettie whose heritage was Irish, adopting other, excessive fashionings was associated with the dangers of slipping out of whiteness:

I dyed my hair black, got my ears pierced with a potato and a needle in the shop, my mother went mad when she saw the big earrings. [...] I said, 'Mum.' I said, "*You were just going to walk past me.*" "*Oh I did see you.*" she said, "*I was ashamed to say hello. You look like a Pakistani*". She was a wee bit racist, but she wasn't racist, Mother was open to everybody but that was the name that was given, which was wrong.<sup>130</sup>

Ellen emphasised the impact of jewellery worn to excess by Barras traders and linked this to perceptions of lifestyles fraught with risk and crime:

Nowadays there's more necklacey things, years ago there wasn't as many necklaces, maybe that's because people can pull it off easily and whatever, but there was rings, loads and loads of rings, shiny rings, very gold rings, lots and lots of gold, that's why you used to, you know, it was like your moveable fortune.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> The definition of 'spiv' links dubiousness to excessive fashioning, "*A hanger on in dubious circles; a man cheaply overdressed without apparent occupation; one who dresses flashily; a petty black market dealer*" (Cassell, 1991).

<sup>129</sup> According to Dyer, Jewish and Irish people have constituted the 'limit case of whiteness' (ibid. p. 53). He claims that "*Whites may be [represented and perceived as] a different hue differentiated according to class... Given the overwhelming advantage of being white, in terms of power, privilege and material well being, who counts as white and who doesn't is worth fighting over – fighting to keep people out, to let strategic groups in, fighting to get in*" (Dyer, 1997, p. 52).

<sup>130</sup> The specificities of jewellery marked otherness. In this passage Ellen linked my own Creole style earrings worn at our meeting with both Barras tarts and a mutual colleague.

AP: [asking about the specificities of 'Barras tart' fashionings] So they had the earrings, what types of earrings can you remember?  
Ellen: Very similar to yours. [Laughter] [...] And Margaret McMahon is another one, gold loops, loops, always loops, never hanging.

AP: Margaret McMahon?

Ellen: The cleaner. [...] Always round loops, always never, never a dangler.

<sup>131</sup> This insight - of portable, ostentatious declarations of wealth links traditions of gold false or capped teeth in both Roma culture and African American hip-hop communities. Gold caps became a vogue crossing to urban British working-class cultures from the 1980s. Inevitably, this was appropriated as sign of outsider exoticisation by fashionistas as in the styling of Madonna circa 1992 (Erotica). More recently glue-on gold teeth caps are sold in the upmarket youth store Urban Outfitters. The appropriations of fantasies of working class cultures and fashionings by the middle-classes and members of the aristocracy can be seen as perverse when acknowledging the demonisation of, for example, Roma and travelling people. Legal changes in the British criminal justice system targeted specifically at travellers, and an intensification of racism across Fortress Europe against Romas has created near impossible conditions for travellers and their families. In contrast to the romanticisation of their lifestyles, their cultures are perceived as threatening, for example: "*The Appleby Horse Fair – arguably the largest gathering of travelling people is an annual event, protected by royal charter since 1685. Despite the profits already made by the event attracting up to 50,000 people councillors want to privatise the event and bring in an events manager to maximise profits for the local community or get rid of it altogether. For most of the year Appleby is a very quiet town. But the problem is that during the*



## The bling bling hegemony: Black jewellery fashioning and modernist taste

The Queen is blinging (Jehst, cited in Harrison, 2003).

In his book *The Jazz Scene*, Newton discussed the form of bohemianism 'turned inside out' that characterised the dress of many of the genre's pioneers. For entertainers whose "*art [was] the only possible way out of squalor and oppression*". Newton noted two ways in which the jazz bohemians were distinguished from their white, bourgeois counterparts; the former had none of the "*horror' of respectable manual work*" and for them in the 'semi-ghettos' of burgeoning commercial entertainment, survival depended on "*behaving like a king*".<sup>132</sup> Traditions of flamboyant forms of sartorial Royal Taste have endured in many contemporary urban African American communities.<sup>133</sup> The literature on black power jewellery use is scant, but the trajectory of underground, Black American music that culminated in hip-hop saw a concomitant explosion of meaningful excessive jewellery use in street and star fashionings.<sup>134</sup> Although blaxploitation stylings can be traced in the hip-hop fashions that developed in New York from the 1970s according to Maycock they "*turned to gold and [Italian fashion house] Gucci in the 1980s*" (Maycock, 2002, p. 30). The look was crossed to the UK and mainstream audiences by stars including Run DMC and Eric B and Rakim.<sup>135</sup> Speaking about the development of Brooklyn street fashion that was to become ubiquitous on MTV the photographer Jamal Shabazz has stated "*back then it was just small chains. Then, after Mr. T [TV's A Team comic book type, Black character] came out, all the big jewellery followed. Jewellery represented power. Clothes represented*

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*fair it changes completely and becomes dirty, crowded smelly and uncomfortable. I wouldn't want to see the fair go but I would to see the discomfort for local residents minimised*" (Ward, 2003, p. 8).

<sup>132</sup> "The jazz musician was [...] potentially a king or a duke, [...] his subjects lived in the slums, and his rival potentates were (coloured) gangsters and crooked politicians, professional gamblers and fighters, fancy women, and occasionally great preachers... he was an enthusiastic and flamboyant dresser, regarding his dress as a symbol of wealth and social status, like the cowboy, the navy, the sailor and other casual but occasionally flush labourers." (Newton, 1959, p. 207)

<sup>133</sup> For example, at Wattstax in the 1960s "*the biggest baddest musical event of the black power era*" excessive jewellery was a vogue amongst male and female black stars and activists including Jesse Jackson who opened the event. Rufus Thomas was medallioned, Isaac Hayes sported a show-stopping, politically resonant gold chain vest and Mavis Staples wore huge hoop earrings (Maycock, 2002, pp. 30-35).

<sup>134</sup> With the development of Black filmmaking John Shaft, the eponymous hero of Gordon Parks' seminal 1971 blaxploitation crossover hit set a further benchmark in the representation of Black style that was sartorially sharp, sexualised and stylistically exaggerated. Portia Maultsby notes that African Americans identified specific cultural symbols in the 1960s to connote soul and these included "*African-derived fashions, ornaments and hairstyles etc.*" (Maultsby in Tate, Maultsby, Davis, Taylor and Reed, 1998, p. 270).

<sup>135</sup> In 1980, proto-rapper Kurtis Blow released his first album appearing on the cover wearing multiple gold chains after which, "*the wearing of wealth [was] compulsory in hip hop circles*" (Bennett, 2001, p. 8). Significantly hip-hop fashioning has routinely embraced un-fashionable brands with a high class resonance absolutely refiguring their signification for example, Kangol hats, Cristal champagne and, more recently Courvoisier (Davis, 2003, p. 15).



power. *A lot of people didn't have cars so your clothes were what represented you. So how you dressed was a representation of who you were*" (Shabazz cited Blanchard and Paul, 2002, p. 50).<sup>136</sup>

The appropriation of urban Black style by the white middle and upper classes reached an apotheosis the end of the twentieth century in the overhaul of the elite group of London-based jewellers. In 2001, Jade Jagger, a so-called celebutante<sup>137</sup> joined the design team at Asprey and Garrard's: *"For the relaunch she wore her own silver 'Punk' graffiti dog tag pendant and another similar but in gold and yellow diamonds with matching knuckleduster [Dukie, two-finger] ring"* (Becker, 2001, p. 17).<sup>138</sup> Black style jewellery was similarly appropriated by *"New York's trashy new heiresses"* including Casey Johnson, heiress to the Johnson and Johnson pharmacy fortune, who told the *Independent*: *"I just bought a diamond belt that spells out 'CASH' [...] And then I got a necklace to match, with a dollar sign, from Puff Daddy's collection. People were like, 'Oh, its tasteless', but I said 'It's such a joke. How can you take it seriously? I guess it takes balls to wear it'"* (Coudenhove Weinberg, 2001, pp. 6-7). The hegemony of black fashions, including trademark jewellery, music and dance in twenty-first century mainstream white British and American cultures is epitomised in both Puff Daddy/ P Diddy/Seam Coombes's feminised, excessive style and his flamboyant entrepreneurialism, dubbed 'ghetto fabulous'.<sup>139</sup> Ghetto fabulousness in the 1990s came to define Black American stars and entrepreneurs who made money and demonstrated this to excess, principally through fashioning, cars and jewellery but who maintained street attitude and/or connections: *"Making it big but not betraying your roots"* (Shepherd, 2000, pp. 42-44). Vaginal Davis has suggested that

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<sup>136</sup> Hip hop fashions were recently the subject of reminiscence in Missy Elliot's, 'Back in the Days' (Elliot, 2002). This excessive use ironically exhausted its signification, requiring the remarketing of gold as I have noted earlier. Honigsbaum cited rappers specifically as contributing to the degradation of gold: *"After 20 years in the doldrums, the hallmark of rappers and medallion men, gold is being re-branded as the must-have metal"* (Honigsbaum, 2001, p. 24). Bennett has noted that the vogue for excessive jewellery was also promoted in Jamaica from the 1980s where dance hall stars wore 'cargo' – hawser-like gold chains around the neck. Bennett notes the saturation of gold in Jamaican youth culture, as in the US has led to a vogue for, 'ice' diamonds and platinum (Bennett, 2001, p. 8).

Although threatening on the registers of sex and gender, African American inspired jewellery excess has inevitably triggered British attempts at ironic appropriation most notably in the construction of Ali G by Sacha Baron Cohen. This appropriation is doubly ironic. Cohen knowingly embodying the 'limit case of whiteness' created a Black character for the 1990s in Ali G – whose original comic raison d'être relied on an audiences' understanding of the gulf between middle-class politicians and feminists and the G from the street. Not only did the purpose of Ali G, a spoof character to ensnare unsuspecting worthies, evaporate as he became more well known, his characterisations become caricatured and catchphrases themselves. Cohen's ultimate cynicism for the overblown, British, ersatz American, excessively fashioned type is reversed in the process of Cohen's being compelled by the media industries to commodify himself. In a *Sunday Times* feature, 'Fashion, Innit' 'Ali G' promoted his new series in a fashion shoot with two female models: *"Tracksuits, loud jewellery and gorgeous girls – what else does a celebrity gangsta need? Ali G who's back on our screens on Friday, gets jiggy with this spring's hottest looks"* (Sunday Times, 2000, pp. 14-18).

<sup>137</sup> A term coined by *Independent* columnist Sophia Coudenhove Weinberg in 2000.

<sup>138</sup> Davis (2003) notes that the three fingered ring, The Dukie, originated in 1985, popularised by MC Duke. While Jagger was signalling street, a form of cultural roughing it in her Dukie ring appropriation, research participant Sue implied, perhaps unintentionally, her view of this style as posh.

AP: So are there any stars whose jewellery - I'm trying to think of any stars that I have seen whose jewellery that I really, really like, I don't know if there are any...

Sue: Sometimes you get stars that have double-barrelled names put across their rings.

<sup>139</sup> Destiny's Child, Missy Elliot, Lil' Kim and Mary J Blige have also shared this epithet.



# Missy Elliott

ducer, composer  
member of girl  
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ott's latest album,  
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forms of ghetto fabulousness in New York can be traced to the late 1970s and 1980s when the style “*had a spark that was its own – one that was vested in equal parts earnestness and irony*” (Davis, 2003).<sup>140</sup> But she has interpreted the expansion of hip hop into the dominant youth culture movement in America as heralding the absorption of ghetto fabulous style into the corporate world developing a “*dark undercurrent*” (Ibid).<sup>141</sup>

Despite being under-researched Black jewellery has played a major part in differentiating African American street styles, signifying musical allegiances, and cultural formations like ghetto fabulousness and bling-bling.<sup>142</sup> The notion of fashioning feminine, and in some instances masculine, excess, relies heavily on the conceptualisation and perception, literally and metaphorically of an idea of scintillation, flash and glitter.<sup>143</sup> The symbolism of Black street jewellery since the 1960s reflects a departure in the politics of working-class youth fashions. This jewellery was characteristically huge, often comically overstated, literal, narrative, political, knowing and flashy to the extent of aping Royalty.<sup>144</sup> Missy Elliot’s matriarchal role and ghetto fabulous pose reprised the hip and aloof effect of Motown stars groomed at Miss Maxine Powell’s pioneering Charm School in the 1960s. Powell’s ambition, in line with that of Berry Gordy’s, for her girls to achieve head-turning glamour and class, was both politically and commercially critical.

Some of the artists were very rude and crude when they came to me; some were from very humble beginnings. I would say to them that my department would make them able to appear before kings and queens, and so I treated *them* like kings and queens. I offered *class*. Class will, turn heads, so in that way I was teaching them self-growth, I taught them about who they were and what made them tick (Powell in Abbott, 2001, p. 60).

<sup>140</sup> Mr Style, a designer for Puff Daddy/P Diddy shares this view: “*In the beginning ghetto fabulousness was authentic and creative taking material icons and trappings and adapting them to the urban American landscape [...] for example taking the Vuitton or Gucci logo off the bag and putting it onto a velour sweatsuit or high top sneakers, something beyond the designer’s scope of reason or reality*” (Mr Style cited in Davis, 2003). Davis, a performance artist and founder of the Afro Sisters claims her brand of ghetto fabulousness was fusion of her “*mother’s outrageousness with blaxploitation fashion*” (ibid.). “*My riff on late 60s/early 70s urban chic didn’t always sit well with certain punk and post punk snobs plus a lot of my looks hadn’t dated long enough to be considered retro. But that just comes with being a style pioneer*” (Davis ibid.).

<sup>141</sup> This view is echoed by fashion editor Glenn Belvario: “*With the loss of irony, ghetto fabulousness surrendered itself to the capitalist system and sacrificed its radical voice at the altar of Mammon*” (Belvario cited in Davis ibid.).

<sup>142</sup> Rapper Jehst, perceives it as having had a longer heritage. ‘Bling’ connotes riches and “*It’s a slang word for just being flash. So, it’s like people have been bling since the Egyptians through to Henry the Eighth to the Queen*” (Jehst cited in Harrison, 2003).

<sup>143</sup> This is illustrated in the styles of gold tooth caps or false nails retailed on sites such as Gold Teeth NY. (<http://www.goldteethny.com>).

<sup>144</sup> Notably in the comic book notion of diamonds and gold ‘blinging’.

In a recent representation, music performer and entrepreneur Missy Elliot appears to deploy ghetto fabulousness to subvert the racist kitsch of Aunt Jemima in her US suburban breakfast bar pose tucking into Missy Elliot Flavor Flakes and sporting headlamp effect bling bling knuckledusters, ice and hoop earrings, white furs and French salon French cut nails (Herald, 2003, p. 12). Elliot’s stance can be interpreted in the context of Black Pride that claimed or appropriated royal status at the most fundamental level evidenced in the pantheon of black stars named Duke (Ellington), Prince, Queen (Latifah), King Oliver, Count Basie, Prince Buster...



Forty years later, Elliot's self-possession and appropriation of pseudo regal fashionings to excess exaggeratedly stated her wealth, ironically commented on the limitations of claims to (rock) aristocracy in a dominant white culture that routinely read gold and ice worn by Blacks as trash, contradicted the reductive reading of Black women as ho's' whilst maintaining her ghetto fabulous status.

By 2000, Black urban American street fashionings had become a desirable, non-ironic look for white, Black, male and female aspirant working class British youth, triggering expressions of anxiety by (white) broadsheet columnists. The obsessional concern/fascination for David Beckham's fashioning and proximity to Black cultures intimated that his taste in jewellery was a Black inspired 'cult'.<sup>145</sup> Notwithstanding the significant political import of Black working-class appropriation of the signification of gold itself, the excessiveness of hip-hop jewellery use has undoubtedly troubled aspects of white, British middle class masculinity.<sup>146</sup> When Paul MacKenzie fronted a programme entitled *Black Like Beckham*, claiming Beckham as a 'brother' and role model for Black and white youth, the broadsheet criticism was derisory:

Apparently it is all to do with Beckham's penchant for bling bling jewellery and ghetto fabulous clothes, plus the fact that he drives a Bentley convertible and has even called his dogs Puffy and Snoop. Unfortunately for the credibility of the programme Beckham has never stepped out with Jennifer Lopez but at least he has Posh – whose short skirts and high heels clearly mark her out as a bitch and a 'ho' (Ellen, 2003, p. 5).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> "There is another interpretation of Beck's baubles: that it is his bite at the 'bling-bling' cherry, the hip hop cult of flash that can be either adjective ('that's bling-bling') or verb ('we were bling-blinging') Whatever, the ghetto fabulous crowd have turned excessive jewellery into a cult" (Bennett, 2001, p. 8). However, for Amina Taylor, editor of the Black, *Pride* magazine, Beckham's embracing of 'bling' and feminine fashioning make him an ideal 'cross-over' icon: "We only have to talk about the sarong incident, we only have to talk about the aliceband incident. This is a guy who is in touch with his feminine side. He's not afraid of looking either a little blinging or a little camp" (Taylor cited in Harrison, 2003).

<sup>146</sup> The *Guardian's* Charlie Porter was incredulous at Beckham's allegedly spending £20,000 on a platinum pair of earrings. In an interesting if predictable analysis Porter linked Beckham's excessive jewellery wearing with femininity, blackness, criminality and effeminacy: "His luxurious hoops look as though they could have been the overflow from his wife's jewellery box. [...] They are incredibly feminine [...] Beckham's ostentatious display of his bank balance is clearly influenced by the ghetto fabulous world of Puff Daddy and the American gangsta rappers. These men who thought jewels went hand in hand with guns often appeared to emulate Liberace in their collection of diamonds and gold" (Porter, 2001, p. 5). The title of this article, 'Diamond Geezers' attempted to situate Beckham-like jewellery consumption in the so-called underworld equivalent to gangsta ghettos, London's mythologised, East End criminal fraternity.

<sup>147</sup> Harrison's controversial programme made a case for Beckham being Black. Amongst other claims presenter MacKenzie stated "He lives bling", he grew up in a cross cultural environment, his vilification during the previous World Cup resembled the daily racism endured by Black Britains, he was Britain's "Number 1 cross-over icon" and "Our most popular hero looks like he stepped out of a P Diddy video" (Harrison, 2003). In May 2003, Beckham was the first high profile white male celebrity to fashion corn-rowed hair (Piper, 2003, p. 3).





56. Filming the Coronation special, *Picturegoer*, 2 May, 1953.



## 6.5 Royal /Vulgar tastes

### Feminine excess as 'Royal Taste'

In this final section I return to the paradox of Royal/Vulgar Taste and the fascination for excess that characterises aspects of working-class women's tastes. This definition is an attempt to characterise the post-war phenomenon of women's will to adorn and its resistance to Modernist hegemony. I argue that the popularisation of Royal/Vulgar excesses occurred in part through the growth of film and media genres including soaps and through the modelling of disdained and dissident fashioning by music, film and TV stars. In an historical and cultural context where working-class women's cultures are perennially scorned, I discuss how spectacular forms of femininity from the 1950s on represented in a range of texts and accounts reveal the motivations for working-class women's identifications with forms of aristocratic excess and taste in their fantasies, consumption and fashioning of femininity.

The post-war reinvention of Royal pageantry had been politically expedient.<sup>148</sup> A significant dimension to the visual representation of the renewed Royalty was jewellery. This is apparent in girls' annuals from the mid 1950s where royal jewels added glamour on a similar register to Hollywood costuming.<sup>149</sup> The new Royals were costumed and choreographed as Britain's Platonic counterpoint to the glamorous, corrupted aura of American movie stars.<sup>150</sup> The (re)appropriation of Royal glamour from Hollywood occurred at a critical point in the construction of femininity in post-war Britain when many women were being lured into fashioning excesses by the US film industries' iconic stars. The glamour of the Coronation provided a synthesis of fantasies that provided a home-grown spectacle of excess, for entertainment if not emulation.<sup>151</sup> By judicious use of staging and backdrops the Beatonisation of the Royals amalgamated real and invented regal signifiers creating a starry gravitas

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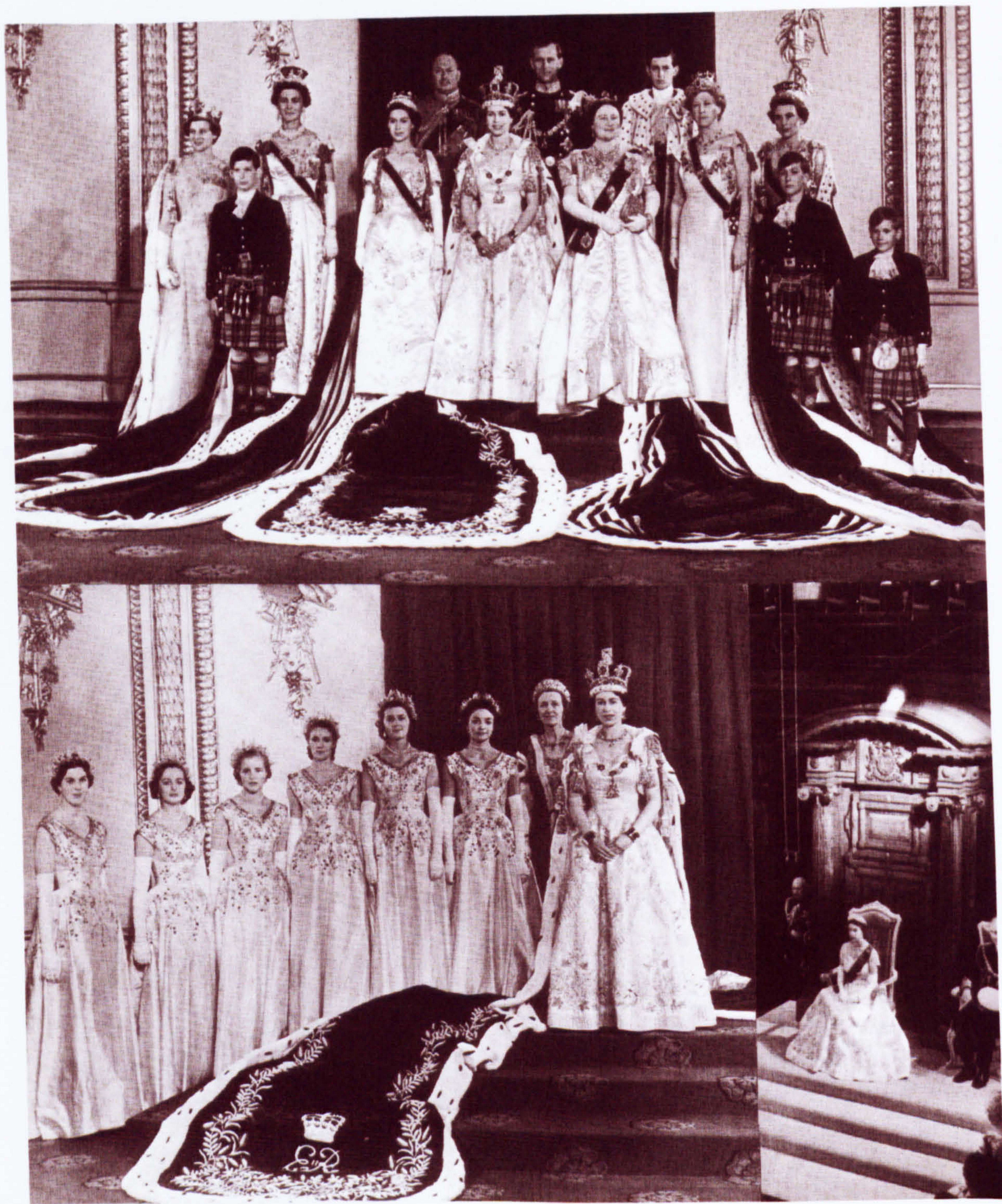
<sup>148</sup> "The newly elected Conservative government was eager to reassert the old order, to reaffirm the hierarchical society which had largely disappeared [at the time of the Coronation]" (Strong, 1988, p. 18).

<sup>149</sup> This is evident in the *Royal Annual* where the first chapter is devoted to the Queen's jewellery (Talbot and Vaughn Thomas, undated). Kuhn has noted the sumptuousness of the Coronation itself was a welcome promise of post-war reconstruction, a country soon to enter "an era of revival, innovation, plenty and even jollity" (Kuhn, 1995, p. 70).

<sup>150</sup> Cecil Beaton, a theatre designer and costumier was a critical agent in glamourising the House of Windsor; he photographed the Royals for 50 years from 1930-1979. Many early images can be seen to mirror in pose, lighting and costuming classic glamour images of Hollywood stars. A *Picturegoer* special, 'Filming the Coronation' had a demure but glamorous Elizabeth (Windsor) on its front cover. In the issue, the Coronation is treated as a soon to be released blockbuster. It provided illustrations of the camera angles to be used 'behind the scenes' and contained an advertisement for Pathe's "full-length Coronation film 'Elizabeth is Queen' in wonderful Warnercolor at most cinemas from June 8<sup>th</sup>" (*Picturegoer*, weekending 2 May, 1953).

<sup>151</sup> Although Kuhn evokes through memory work the costumes she and friends wore at Coronation parties (Kuhn, 1995, pp. 59-66).





57. Unaccredited photographs of the Coronation, unpaginated, *The Queen's Clothes*, Robb and Anne Edwards, London: Book club associates, undated.



that invested his sitters with an anachronistic aura. Strong has discussed how the art historical canon was deployed by Beaton to inject added value into images of the Queen for *Vogue*:

In 1940, Beaton photomontaged one of his romantic 1939 photographs of the Queen onto a series of reproductions of oil paintings of earlier British royalty, deliberately and accurately placing his work for the Royal Family in a direct line of descent from the court painters of the past [Holbein, Velasquez or Van Dyck.] Beaton's portraits, therefore have played a crucial part in the creation of what recent historians have categorised as 'invention of tradition' (Strong, 1988, p.19).

Beaton's aestheticisation of the Royals, to create a "*new Elizabethan Age*" (Kuhn, 1995, p. 70) was undertaken in partnership with couturier and former theatrical costumier Norman Hartnell, who was recruited to Royal service around the same time.<sup>152</sup> Beaton's project has been interpreted as, in part, a reaction to the unpopular modernisation of the image of the monarchy.

He had re-created a powerful visual mythology for the Crown after Edward VIII's disastrous dabbling with Modernism [...] No less important was the establishment of the new Queen's style as the antithesis to the modernistic chic of the Duchess of Windsor. It was instead an evocation of the *ancien regime* grandeur and high glamour overlaid by thirties romantic revivalism. What in retrospect is so astonishing is that this style of dress was revived in the post-war period (ibid. p. 18).

The authors of royal annuals and other books for girls from the 1950s<sup>153</sup> promoted a similar dyad to that evidenced in non-royal themed texts in this genre, a satisfying emphasis on detail, decoration and excess, alongside proscriptive advice. Descriptions of the young female Royals emphasised their innate demureness, their disinterest in showiness and immunity to fashion.<sup>154</sup> The

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<sup>152</sup> For three decades Hartnell, the 'couturier laureate' dressed most female Royals. Strong has noted that, on occasions, Beaton and Hartnell's work involved the iconic construction of the Royals en masse: "*On great state occasions such as the Coronation of 1953 he designed virtually every dress, which accounts for the harmony of the tableaux*" (ibid. p. 24). According to Strong both Hartnell and Beaton were: "*skilled at orchestrating what was in fact a royal crowd sequence, when colours and cut most complement each other and in which the monarch's clothes must be seen to be the most resplendent*" (ibid. p. 25). The correlation of Busby Berkeley style choreography and State or Royal pageantry is evoked in this passage.

<sup>153</sup> And I am claiming here that Royal annuals were indeed marketed and edited for girl readers.

<sup>154</sup> For example Winn stated: "*Unlike most girls today Princess Margaret never wears earrings, and I have noticed with some interest that she never wears a ring either, while her hands, far from being the scarlet claws that are fashionable today, have only very pale varnish on their nails*" (Winn, 1951, p. 97). However, Royal moviegoers, especially Margaret, increasingly revealed through her self-representation how Hollywood had shaped her identifications.



sycophancy of Royal watchers and hagiographers insisted that the Queen possessed innate good taste and, implausibly, found her to be dressed modestly and appropriately on all occasions.<sup>155</sup>

Research participants in this and other studies have remembered the restrictions in the 1950s and 1960s on uses of jewellery, make-up, hair products and clothes, where indulgence in excesses was read as vain and inappropriately sexualising. In contrast, aristocratic expressions of excess were the prerogative of female Royals and the elite models employed by *Vogue*, who in this period were frequently well connected. As aristocrats such women were at liberty to construct womanliness, for example, Dior's New Look that was to dominate fashion in the 1950s was first embodied by Barbara Goalen the 'society by association' mannequin for *Harper's Bazaar* and British *Vogue*.<sup>156</sup> But the New Look was itself a further appropriation of low fashioning, based as it was "*on Dior's memories of the courtesans of Paris's Belle Epoque around 1900 was designed for women, not girls*" (Horwell, 2002, p. 24).<sup>157</sup>

Despite the modernist hegemony in fashion and design in the post-war period, aristocratic dressing to excess sustained an ambivalent appeal for the middle classes; their bohemian flamboyance a knowing exception to the constraints of the Modernist mantra that 'less is more'. They provided a foil to self-referential forms of Modernist fashioning that ultimately styled women as boys. By the 1960s and 70s the pedigree of the model, preferably exotic and/or aristocratic intuited by fashionistas evoked the romance of a bohemian aristocracy, epitomised by the model Veruschka.<sup>158</sup> Veruschka's jewellery excesses, or those of 'society by association' figures such as Nancy Cunard or the Duchess of Windsor signalled in their styling a self-conscious awareness of the Modernist underpinning of their excess. This

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<sup>155</sup> "The queen has natural good taste in the matter of jewels, and has further received the benefit of the experience of that fine connoisseur, the late Queen Mary. She will wear nothing that is not perfect of its kind. She also feels that a few pieces well chosen to suit the occasion are far more effective than masses of jewels indiscriminately worn" (Talbot and Vaughn Thomas, p. 90).

<sup>156</sup> Veronica Horwell noted in her obituary of Goalen that: "She did not have to work. Her father was the owner of a Malaysian rubber plantation. As a pre-war model she was treated as society-by-association, couture gowns were loaned for the evening [...] chauffeured Rolls Royce's, liners to America... She favoured a lacquered bouffant which she stayed with for life after experimenting with the gamine look [...] She made no concessions to the brevity of skirts and dearth of real jewellery in the 1960s [preferring her] own extreme style" (Horwell, 2002, p. 24). According to Horwell: "Between 1947 and 1954 the British queen of hauteur was Barbara Goalen [...] Britain's first supermodel [came] from an age of mannequins, debutantes and couture gowns" (Horwell, 2002, p. 24).

<sup>157</sup> Notwithstanding their brief (re-) appropriation of the New Look (Partington, 1992) working-class women in the first two decades after the War remained in a fashioning vacuum where little but health, modesty and cleanliness were socially sanctioned. Following the iconic memories of Jean Shrimpton cited earlier, I wanted to remark on the ubiquity of references to prostitutes' fashionings in the creations authored by fashion designers and the icons created in popular culture. In this respect it is interesting to note that O'Grady's creation Lily Savage was forged in part from a memory of prostitutes: "When he [O'Grady] starts describing the prostitutes he came across as a court clerk it becomes apparent they might have been prototype Lilies. 'They'd had the rollers ripped out of their hair in the cells but they were so brave. I used to admire them for giving as good as they got...' O'Grady's female relatives were also iconic: 'And there was my Auntie Chrissie, who was a clippie on the buses. She had a hard life but she used to suck her cheeks in and fancy herself as Marlene Dietrich'" (O'Grady interviewed by Picardie, 1995, p. 4).

<sup>158</sup> Born, Countess Vera Gottliebe Anna von Lehndorff; her father was a Prussian count, Veruschka enjoyed something of a renaissance when her excessive look was rediscovered in 2003 by fashion designer Michael Kors. Kors: "sent on to the catwalk a collection he dubbed Veruschka's Voyage, a holiday wardrobe gleaming with gold embroidery and hot pink and orange tie-dyes. Kors models looked like leisured, sun tanned bohemians sporting collar-bone skimming earrings made of linked brass discs" (West, 2003, p. 38).



generated a strain of Modernism that produced the inevitable exception to its prohibitions; an aristocratic Modernity, a judicious, artful ornamentation as opposed to Royal Vulgarity. The Royal family, at least the immediate female members during Beaton's reign, signalled an obliviousness to Modernism. Rather, they expressed an excessive, *Royal Taste*, long considered vulgar by the steadily expanding middle-class style cognoscenti.<sup>159</sup>

Royal Taste is anathema to Modernism in its commitment to narrative excess. The imperative for the Queen's clothes to tell people something, is illustrated in an homage to the Queen's clothes by the illustrator Robb, published in 1977 to coincide with the Silver Jubilee. In his pious introduction Hartnell described the literal didacticism of her Coronation garment and wardrobe for a Royal tour, created according to the Queen's instruction.<sup>160</sup> A further distinction between Modernism and Royal paradoxically Vulgar Taste is in their respective eschewing/embracing of realism. In the case of Royal/Vulgar taste this is emphasised in a shrinking or enlarging of scale, the miniaturisation or gigantism emphasising the efforts of achieving a realistic effect a process at odds with Modernist orthodoxy and as Susan Stewart has provocatively theorised, instilling a sense of nostalgia and craftsmanship (Stewart, 1993, p. 69).

### Elizabeth: an icon of Royal/Vulgar Taste

The proximity of stars to Royalty increased in the post-war period and that audiences shared in the pleasures of excess expressed by both. Taylor played a significant role in carving new excessive models of femininity for female audiences in her equivocal position as Queen of Hollywood Royalty. Taylor was indisputably an icon of glamour for female film audiences of the 1950s and 1960s including research participants *and* a wilful champion of vulgar excess specifically in her association with excessive jewellery.<sup>161</sup> Critics however deemed her career irrevocably compromised by her Royal Tastelessness. Freeman has referred to Taylor as "*The Henry the Eighth of the cinematic world, more famous for her bizarre appearance and over-weighted wedding finger than for any of her*

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<sup>159</sup> In a recent 'insolent' interview the historian David Starkey outed the vulgar, excessive roots of British 'Royal Taste'. Asked why his TV series on Tudor England had focussed on the detail of court 'haberdashery' Starkey retorted: "*Because they spent a very large part of the royal income on it. If you want to know where the wealth from the dissolution of the monasteries went, well- that's where. Henry VIII died with the world's largest collection of tapestry. It was made of silk, gold and silver; embroidered with pearls. And a typical court outfit would have jewels on it that were worth in their money - £10,000... that's why it is important. One of the things Modernists fail to grasp is that this was a wholly aristocratic, ostentatious display. At the risk of being racist, this is a period of Ay-rab values, the values of Donald Trump*" (Starkey quoted in Walsh, 2001b, p. 1).

<sup>160</sup> "*For Canada it was the maple leaf in green velvet and emeralds on pale green; for Australia the yellow mimosa (or wattle); for France the fleur des champs - gold with Napoleon's busy bee in brown chenille; for the Vatican, jet and diamonds on black lace with a veil for the audience with the Pope; for Pakistan emerald beads and diamonds and for Japan a mist of pink cherry-blossom cascading down a backcloth of azure chiffon. And in another all the emblems of Great Britain and the Commonwealth clustered together upon the dress I designed for Her Majesty's Coronation. They hang there not as a memoir of ephemeral fashion but as a reminder of the historic significance of all the great State visits, so dutifully undertaken by our beloved monarch, Her Majesty the Queen*" ('Robb', 1977, p. 7).

<sup>161</sup> Maddox has noted Taylor's treatment as Hollywood Royalty. Her 'queening it' provoked Lucille Ball to curtsy when the Burton's appeared on *I Love Lucy* and she referred to the star as, 'Your Highness' and 'Your Majesty' (Maddox, 1977, p. 233)



accomplishments" (Freeman, 2003, p. 8). Erasing the perennial fascination of her female audiences and fans he places Taylor in a "neglected and embarrassing hinterland [...] Not sufficiently tragic to be reincarnated as a camp icon, not ironic enough to be deemed worthy of critical reappraisal" (ibid.). Criticism of Taylor's excessive style characterised high evaluations of her work from at least the early 1970s.<sup>162</sup> *The New York Times*, following Burton's purchasing of the Cartier Burton diamond for Taylor, articulated moral indignation against her: "In this age of Vulgarity marked by such minor matters as war and poverty, it gets harder each day to scale the heights of true vulgarity. But given some loose millions, it can be done – and worse, admired" (ibid. p. 212). Her biographer Maddox enumerates criticisms by journalists and industry professionals alike.<sup>163</sup> For example, Alan Williams's description of her fashioning at her fortieth birthday party: "a beautiful doughnut covered in diamonds and paint" (ibid. p. 216) was in itself a definition of Royal Taste.<sup>164</sup>

Taylor's taste remains a benchmark of excess. Some thirty years after Beaton's remarks, the *Independent* critiqued her in a queered sense for taking excess 'too seriously', and as a foil for Claudia Schiffer's Modernist chic.<sup>165</sup>

### Royal/Vulgar Taste: costume excesses as matter out of time and place

Even in contemporary critiques of feminine excess, the strength of repulsion is evocative of a form of Puritanism. It may be argued that exponents of Modernism display a prudery about what Douglas coined 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966): symbolic material that is found in inappropriate places that has profound social and cultural signification. Distinctions and calibrations of good and bad taste, appropriate and inappropriate fashionings of materials and matter in and out of place figure, as Douglas's anthropological perspective implied, across Modernist, nineteenth century and post-modern

<sup>162</sup> A *Village Voice*'s critique of her 1973 TV vehicle, *Divorce His, Divorce Hers* noted "the vulgar medallion [between her] projectile-like tits" and her "gross finger-ring" (cited in Maddox, 1977, pp. 226-7).

<sup>163</sup> Elliott Kastner protested "Sim-ple-city, Elizabeth!... Elizabeth has taste up her ass. If she were low key, she'd leave Grace Kelly in the dust." (ibid. p. 235). Taylor is frequently cast as competing for the top spot with Grace Kelly in popular 'Most Glamorous/Elegant/Beautiful Woman' listings. Kelly's chic, understated style was rewarded with real Princess status when she married Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1955. Kelly heads a recent list of the 100 most elegant women, apparently selected by 'British fashion industry experts' (Collins 2001, p. 5). Milmo, appraising the list concluded, "Modern women may enjoy greater freedom and power than their forebears, but when it comes to beauty the nation hankers after just two things- the pearl earrings and clipped vowels of yesteryear." (Milmo 2001 no page available) He notes that, "Elizabeth Taylor – once reigned as the epitome of screen dignity – ranks 58<sup>th</sup>, one place behind Elizabeth I, who was renown for her baldness, bad breath and ruthless temper" (Milmo, 2001, p. 5).

<sup>164</sup> Beaton, from an incomparable vantage point, appears to fuse Taylor's vulgarity with Royal Windsor Taste. He recorded an encounter with the Burtons in 1971. *Vogue* had implored Beaton to photograph Taylor at the event, a ball hosted by Marie-Helene de Rothschild to celebrate the birth of Proust since, according to Beaton: "they find every issue carrying her picture is a sell-out": "I have always loathed the Burtons for their vulgarity, commonness and crass bad taste, she combining the worst of US and English taste, he as butch and coarse as a Welshman can be [...] Round her neck was velvet ribbon with the biggest diamond in the world pinned on it. On her fat, coarse hands more of the biggest diamonds and emeralds her head a ridiculous mass of diamond necklaces sewn together. And this, the woman who is the greatest 'draw'. In comparison everyone else looked ladylike" (Beaton quoted in Vickers, 2002, p. 1). Beaton had long considered Royal Taste exercised by the female Royals as vulgar. Encountering Princess Margaret a year later at a reception at Windsor with Laurence Olivier and Joan Plowright Beaton bitched, "She wore harsh white and hair scraped back like a wealthy seaside landlady" (Beaton quoted in Vickers, 2002, p. 2).

<sup>165</sup> It began somewhat disingenuously: "The one person we all trusted not to get diamonds wrong was Liz Taylor, so famous for her addition to ostentatious rocks. But even Liz can make mistakes. Last week at a Hollywood event she set off big hair and scary make-up with a garish earring and necklace ensemble, all sparkling diamonds, emeralds and gold, leaving her looking like an over-baubled Christmas tree. Admittedly her look was in keeping with the current vogue for achieving high-voltage glamour with glitzy accessories, but it is all too easy to get it wrong. Accessories, even diamonds lose their impact if you overload. Keep to one extravagant piece and you are a fashion player; take the Dynasty look too seriously, teaming a big necklace with a gaudy pair of earrings, and you are in danger of being branded a style slave. [...] Claudia Schiffer [...] wore a platinum and diamond necklace and matching bracelet with a simple black dress, unfussy hair and understated makeup" (*Independent*, unauthorred, 2000, p. 4).



critiques and in the accounts of research participants in their evaluations of their own and others constructions of femininity:

Ellen: I think that we can get away with that with Aunt Moira because she was a dancer so she wore those clothes-- but her mother and her sister weren't, so they weren't quite classy in the sense that it might be, might be, might be more - looking at Aunt Margaret because Aunt Margaret, because Aunt Moira and Aunty Maggie were very attractive people, very tall and elegant and thin and looked fantastic in whatever, you know, Aunty Maggie could wear something from the Barras, but Aunt Margaret was quite stout and maybe didn't look so fantastically well...

For many, jewellery was to be handled with care, reserved for times and spaces when and where it would be 'in place'.

Pauline: I wear jewellery at the weekend aye, I don't usually wear it during the week. [...] I like costume jewellery, I really like a bit of costume jewellery when I'm going out.

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Maureen: I don't like jewellery at all no, I'm not fond of jewellery. My mum she bought me a locket and I won't wear it. [...] The only thing is, if I'm really going out and the likes of [indecipherable] I'll put on blouse, I'll put on a necklace and my locket and I'll maybe get out my big earrings so that means I'll be nice going out.<sup>166</sup>

## Soap queens and the appropriation of Royal Taste

### (i) Post-modern appropriations of the iconography of female royalty

The queen can perhaps through long familiarity with them, carry off with regal assurance more diamonds than any fashion expert would permit: diamond tiara, diamond necklace, diamond chandelier earrings, diamond bracelets, diamond brooches, and diamond ring; and on her it never seems a diamond too much.... Sparkling from head to toe she has never looked flashy or vulgar. No matter how elegant the crowd around her, she never fails to steal the show, and not only because her diamonds are bigger and better. She has

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<sup>166</sup> The notion of nighttime and daytime fashioning is acknowledged in most advice texts. For example, in the text, *Accessory Chic*, the author notes that 'daytime wear can become eveningwear by clipping on a pair of earrings' (Roderick, 1986, p. 145). This reiterates ideas raised earlier concerning notions of in/appropriate times and places for fashioning (See also Black, 2001, p. 9). Fawcett has critiqued Newcastle girls' on 'the toon' in just these terms: "In 1999 both summer and winter clothes were dominated by pink, mauve and black. These outfits would have been described a party or special occasion clothes 20 or 30 years ago, but they are now worn on any night of the week and often in daytime situations too" (Fawcett, 2002, p. 131).





58. Cover, *Vogue*, December, 2001.



a personal royal sparkle which matches her dress and her jewels and with these three weapons she obliterates the competition (Robb and Edwards, 1977, p. 65).

Whilst Victoriana, sentimentality and mock aristocratic taste defined outmoded excess for both Modernism and feminism, mocking Royal/Vulgarity and appropriating excessive femininity (bouffanting, fishnets, make-up, stilettos, tutus...) became the aesthetics of punk. The aesthetic critique of the aura of royalty, can be identified in the paradoxical iconic iconoclasm of Warhol's screen prints that suggested, in his selection of subjects, an equivalence of value between Hollywood stars, Communist Leaders, British Royals, himself and Presidents' wives. Commentators have privileged the role of Situationist and Warholian informed punk in deconstructing the aura of the British monarchy.<sup>167</sup> Punk's own seamless capitalist capitulation, reappropriation and commodification and its displacement by banal pop products seemingly untouched by its anarchic proselytising has in recent years been epitomised by the mainstream entrepreneurial ambitions of punk's champions Malcolm McLaren, Vivienne Westwood and John Lydon/Rotten.<sup>168</sup>

Punk's aesthetic traces are visible in the trailer-trash, prom queen bastardisations discussed earlier but the heavyweight fashion magazines have remained conservative in their paradoxical modernist taste /indulgence of aristocratic performances of excess. Westwood's legacy was however, identifiable in *Vogue* magazine's Royal special (December, 2001) where punk was comfortably accommodated as a retro style. Kate Moss, the current queen of the fashion aristocracy was ironically enthroned on the cover. In this issue devoted to *Vogue's* role in supporting (and recreating) the monarchy, a trajectory was traced that linked Beaton's early images of the Queen Mother, his first

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<sup>167</sup> Jamie Reid's now canonical punk iconoclasm gave rise to a paradigm-shifting image in his God Save the Queen graphics for the Sex Pistols. This collage depicted the Queen in Royal regalia deconstructed through graphic processes in the former her eyes and mouth ripped off and hijacker cut-outs spelt out 'God Save the Sex Pistols' ([www.jamiereid.uk.net/cgi-bin/ip.pl](http://www.jamiereid.uk.net/cgi-bin/ip.pl)). The work reflected/created the underground *zeitgeist*. Its release coincided with the Silver Jubilee celebrations. The record ensured a mythical status in becoming one of the few Number 1 records banned by the BBC.

<sup>168</sup> Punk fashion, popularly attributed to Westwood paved the way for the designer's couture career. Her royal appropriations and interventions including her logo, an orb, early collections that included stuffed crowns and ersatz ermine cloaks and more recently her upstaging of the Queen by going knickerless to collect her MBE suggested an enduring iconoclasm. However, Westwood's identification with aspects of royal taste and her self-conscious reinvention as salon hostess and patriot signified her determination to play with rather than undermine royalty. In this the punk generation resembled other rock rebels. Hoskins has noted that Mick Jagger, Bryan Ferry and Madonna are conservative in their taste for elite institutions and prefer the public schools system for their children, Jagger and Ferry have children at Eton (Jade went to Bedales) and Madonna has Lourdes down for Cheltenham Ladies College (Hoskins, 2001, p. 7). Proximity to, or identifications with Royalty percolate through the rock and art and design fields. Arch modernist Pawson, also educated at Eton and Oxford is out about his own "*aristocratic Burgundian ancestry*" (Rumbold, 1996, p. 11).





59. Elizabeth Taylor in the role of Cleopatra on the cover of *Film Show* annual, 1962.



patron, and Mario Testino's posthumously published images of Lady Di. Despite this, no royals were considered fashionable or ironic enough to adorn the front cover.<sup>169</sup>

## (ii) The subjugated iconoclasm of Royal Taste in disdained fashionings of femininity

Jane: You should see my pal if you think someone in here is bad with jewellery, Diane, aye, all her rings and all that. She gives it six rings on each finger and bangles and about twelve chains round her neck and everything.

My analysis of work with research participants, of memory work data and post-war media texts suggested specific developments in forms of feminine excess in post-war popular culture. One finding is that the Royal aura and by extension, the plausibility of Royal prerogatives have been eroded by the effect of appropriation, identification and performances of Royal Taste excesses by working-class female film and soap stars and their audiences.<sup>170</sup> Although the musical, fine art and design canons have tended to support the notion of the agency of academic iconoclasm, I argue in this chapter that female soap stars and others who dress to excess can be seen as tarnishing the aristocratic aura.<sup>171</sup>

The fantasy of encrusted femininity and of queening it can be seen to have been realised in the performances and habitus of an array of British female stars of popular culture, following Taylor's imperious and brazen model.<sup>172</sup> Maddox has detailed Taylor's idiosyncratic, gallus approach,

In 1968 just after she received the ring, [the infamous Krupp] she and Burton, along with Noel Coward, the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, went down to Kent to attend the wedding of Sheran Cazalet to Simon Hornby. It was the society wedding of the year. To get to the church, the guests had to walk up a long path across a green up to the church door, as the villagers

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<sup>169</sup> The message? The Royals have not been wholly dispensed with through punk's agency but are not deemed *Vogue* fit. In a recent tongue in cheek article in *The Guardian*, Freeman suggested that designers Miuccia Prada and Louis Vuitton had been inspired in their last collections by the Queen's 'frumpy', 'awkwardly pleated' style (Freeman, 2003, p. 12). 'Liz chic' can be read as an ironic, middle class appropriation of Royal frumpiness, a stealth wealth alternative to the ironic tiara wearing that is deemed by implication, and, in the queered vernacular *sooo* last year.

<sup>170</sup> The impact of such changes on the identifications of female Royals, the notion of the Royals in this period as consumers themselves of film, in Buckingham Palace's private cinema, and TV is thought provoking. Bonnar has noted that the Queen requested a taped episode of *Coronation Street* on a state visit to Mexico (Bonnar, 1995, pp. 4-5).

<sup>171</sup> This observation should be understood in the context of both academic and high media disdain for identifications with stars (and Royals). Non-ironic identification with royals and stars is more often articulated as an embarrassing, youthful *faux pas* to be outgrown, a sign of cultural lack. Ginny Dougray inferred this in her *Guardian* article that discussed the impact that resembling Elizabeth Taylor had had on her as a young woman. Adopting an almost apologetic tone and highlighting the shortcomings of those who uncritically model themselves on stars or royals she claimed: "I was concerned that it might seem deranged to be exploring the idea that I felt a personal connection with Liz because someone once said that I bore a passing resemblance to her. I reminded myself of the old bag in a film I once saw who thrust a photograph of Princess Diana in front of her hairdresser and announced, 'I want to look like that'" (Dougray, 2000, pp. 36-42).

<sup>172</sup> Reaching its apotheosis on the screen in the film *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz, 1963) iconic stills of Taylor saturated Film and Star annuals and magazines from 1962 until after its release in 1963. For example, Simmons 1962, and *ABC Film* annual, 1964.



crowded around to gawp at the greats. As Taylor and Burton headed up the path, Lady d'Avigdor-Goldsmid, another guest, recalls, 'Elizabeth removed her glove and held her hand, with that enormous rock against her throat. They all knew she had it because they had read about it in the papers. The crowd cheered. They just loved it. Of *course* it was vulgar. *You* wouldn't have done it, *I* wouldn't have done it. She is *vulgar*, tremendously. But she is a *star*, and it was just right' (Maddox, 1977, p. 213).<sup>173</sup>

In her second autobiography Taylor related a clearly treasured anecdote that featured her royal counterpart, Princess Margaret. The passage illustrated the knowingness of Taylor's indulgence in feminine excess and her confidence in her own Royal/Vulgar taste:

I love beautiful things and Richard [Burton] responded by showering me with glittering tokens of love. The Krupp diamond, the most publicised of his gifts, was only one of many splendours.[...] I remember attending a wedding in London at which I was seated next to Princess Margaret. At one point the princess glanced at my ring and said, 'Is that the famous diamond?' 'Yes.' I responded, lifting my hand so she could see it better. She took another look and said, 'Its so large! How very vulgar.' 'Yes.' I answered, 'Ain't it great!' 'Would you mind if I tried it on?' continued the Princess, 'Not at all.' I said and slipped the ring into her hand (Taylor, 1987, pp. 84-5).

Coterminous with Taylor's usurping of Royal status, soap stars or queens became rooted in British popular culture.<sup>174</sup> In *Coronation Street*, Phoenix's archetype, Elsie Tanner provided a model, significantly on and off screen, of a powerful working-class woman who paradoxically embodied an excessive femininity. The notion of a working-class character/personality who earned the popular (media) epithet 'queen' has a matrilineal line from Phoenix's precedent. Female audiences' adoption of

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<sup>173</sup>Speaking of the Krupp, Burton's gift that Taylor wore on a daily basis, Maddox inferred a political context to its appeal for Taylor: "Taylor knew where it came from- the hand of the wife of the German munitions maker. [she said] "I think that it is nice that a little Jewish girl has it now. '" (Maddox, 1977, p. 213). Taylor's collection of gems are arguably as well known as most of her husbands: "Burton bought his wife the Krupp diamond, a 33.9 carat square cut diamond for \$305,000. Next he bought, not a diamond but a pearl; *La Peregrina* which King Philip of Spain gave to Mary Tudor in 1554 which cost him \$3,000. Then came the inch thick Cartier Burton diamond priced at the sum associated with Taylor's name, one million dollars" (ibid. p. 212). In 2002 Taylor published, in Freeman's view, "the fabulously awful" (Freeman, 2003, p. 8) *Elizabeth Taylor: my love affair with jewellery* (Taylor, Peltason, Matsumoto, 2002). The text, allegedly by Taylor, tells the story of her life through jewellery. Her queenly/vulgar demeanour was not diminished by old age as critics have increasingly mapped her fashioning onto unflattering notions of Royal Taste: "Elizabeth Taylor has more in common with Elizabeth II than a high voice, an odd shape and big handbags. They are growing older in the same way, taking on the look of sexless oriental potentates, with their geological gems and turbans that hide every shred of hair" (ibid. p. 233). Penelope Mortimer, reviewing *Secret Ceremony* stated 'In spite of her skill, I have an irresistible compulsion to think of her as the Queen Mother playing charades' (ibid. p. 242).

<sup>174</sup> Queens in other fields of popular culture are now endemic; Dolly has been dubbed the Queen of Country, Aretha Franklin the Queen of Soul, Joan Collins, the Queen Mother of British show business etc. (Russell, 1996, p. 11).





60. Julie Goodyear in *Queen of the Street*, Sally Beck, 1995, unpaginated.



stars as queens, can be seen as fulfilling the individual and collective working-class aspirations of both stars and audiences.<sup>175</sup>

Tony Warren's aim of constructing a working-class realism in the text of *Coronation Street* ironically culminated in the creation of a matrilineal, Hollywoodised ersatz aristocracy.<sup>176</sup> Phoenix, like her contemporary, Taylor revelled in the incursions into formally aristocratic fashionings and habitus.<sup>177</sup> Goodyear, Phoenix's friend and successor as 'Queen of the Street' has been dubbed with the inevitable camp reference: "*a cross between Queen Elizabeth I and Danny La Rue*" (Irvine, 1995, p. 17).<sup>178</sup>

In fact the trope of aristocracy has recurred equivocally throughout *Coronation Street's* run, frequently mirroring Royal occasions. Excessively fashioned Vera Duckworth's genealogical links to King Edward VII (is he or isn't he her great grandfather?) had been periodically raised in storylines, most recently on the Queen's Golden Jubilee Day. For episodes leading up to the Queen's Silver Jubilee the scriptwriters generated the celebrated fancy dress float storyline where, memorably 'Annie Walker' and 'Bet Lynch' appeared dressed as Elizabeth I and Britannia respectively.<sup>179</sup> In 1983, in a public relations manoeuvre, the Queen and Prince Philip opened the *Street's* new set. Emboldened, in 2000 Prince Charles appeared in a bit part, playing himself shaking hands with 'Councillor Audrey Roberts' at the Weatherfield Planning Office in the series' live fortieth anniversary edition. This move, a restorative one for Charles' flagging, post-Diana profile was ambivalently critiqued as "*yet another*

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<sup>175</sup> In one of her autobiographies, Phoenix noted that: "*We [Julie Goodyear and Phoenix] care about our fans. We have the regulars who have been writing to us for years. One lady who has been writing to me for at least fifteen years – and I to her – recently passed away. I met her at a function. She suffered from arthritis and was in a wheelchair but got her daughter to take her to the shop where I was appearing, struggling to push the chair through the crowds. We were introduced and on impulse I gave her a piece of china as a memento. After that she wrote regularly, always starting her letters, 'My Queen'*" (Phoenix, 1983, p. 169).

<sup>176</sup> Producer Bill Podmore noted that Phoenix "*completely glamorised herself out of the original Elsie mould*" (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 29). "*She was flamboyant, loud and loving, a throwback to the magnificent mink bikini days of Hollywood; [...] Seeing her wrapped in her beloved furs, [writer] Tony Warren would greet her, shouting, 'Here she comes. Catherine of all the bleedin' Russias.'* It was a compliment she loved, and the one she quoted the most" (ibid. p. 28).

<sup>177</sup> Her autobiography noted "*This summer I joined the select rank of people, including the queen and the queen mother, who have races named after them*" (Phoenix, 1983, p. 150). She was the first soap star to have a state-like funeral in 1986 when thousands of people in Manchester lined the route of her cortège. Goodyear's biographer records "*Julie and most of the Street cast had attended the funeral of the programmes former star Pat Phoenix. Julie was heavily criticised for arriving in a huge show-stealing hat up staging Pat at her own funeral. It seemed to be a case of - the Queen is dead; long live the Queen*" (Beck, 1995, p. 179).

<sup>178</sup> Her trademark wearing of leopard skin, the most ostentatious of fake furs, on and off screen, became a form of substitute ermine, a symbolic device of Royal/Vulgar spectacle. Leopardskin performs this function in representations of other working-class soap queens but was indubitably infused with symbolism and nostalgia for Goodyear. On leaving the *Street*, she claimed "*There's bound to be one or two mementoes I'll want to take with me when I go. I can't pull the Rovers bar apart but perhaps I'll take Bet's leopard skin hat and trousers than I can sit and watch the show dressed as Bet – hoping the men in white coats don't come and take me away*" (Robson, 1995, p. 29).

<sup>179</sup> The title itself is both banal and ironic. The scriptwriters created carnivalesque storylines at times of Royal celebrations. "*To celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee, Coronation Street devised a float depicting Great Britain through the ages. Bet Lynch sat resplendent as Britannia ... but the Oscars had to go to Annie and Ena. Annie was superb as Queen Elizabeth I, but Ena's Queen Victoria was so lifelike it drew gasps even from the production crew. When these two great queens strode towards each other from either end of Coronation Street, I think they created a little piece of history all of their own*" (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 86). Annie Walker's character grew more and more to resemble the incumbent Thatcher who, herself was a usurper of Royal Taste (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 122). For her own wedding in 1951, Thatcher had chosen a copy of a dress worn by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire as immortalised in Gainsborough's painting.





61. Beverley Callard and Prince Charles on the Rovers Return set, cover, *Daily Record*, 29 December, 2000.



'E.R.'s Enders', Pam St Clements meets the Queen on the set of the Queen Vic, *Daily Record*, 29 November, 2001, page 3.



'The House of Windsors', *Scottish Sun*, 29 November, 2001, front page.





62. Barbara Windsor and the Queen on the set of *Eastenders*' Albert Square, December 2001, in *Hello!*, 11 December, 2001, Issue 692, page 27.



*step towards the ultimate dumbing down of the Monarchy or merely [his joining] in what millions see as a national institution*" (Kwatra, 2000, p. 1). The risk for the Royals appeared to be related principally to the anarchic combination of excessive femininity embodied by soap queens and the precociousness of the red top press.<sup>180</sup> A year later, the Golden Jubilee year, the Queen made an appearance on the *Eastenders* set, prompting a similarly ambivalent royalist but risqué coverage in the British press.<sup>181</sup> The focus for the most roguish coverage focussed on the twinning of Elizabeth and her namesake Barbara Windsor as in the *Telegraph's* 'The Windsor's make it a double at the Queen Vic' (*The Daily Telegraph*, Nov 29, 2001, p. 5).<sup>182</sup>

In 2002, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Year, the relentless fragmentation of the aura of the monarchy necessitated further risks of contiguity with soap royals. Geraldine Bedell announced, ahead of the celebrations, that Babs Windsor was due to join the Jubilee Parade as 'a cultural icon' (Bedell, 2002, p. 3): "*She is [...] by royal approval, a cultural icon, invited to join Tuesday's jubilee parade on something called the 'cultural icons' float*".<sup>183</sup> At Buckingham Palace Shirley Bassey played an even more prominent role, a virtual member of the Royal party, appearing inexplicably on TV coverage as Prince Charles' consort. Bassey, another champion of Royal Taste had carved a profile to rival Taylor's precedent, brazenly appropriating regal habitus and associations, as in her annual tour of Stately Homes.<sup>184</sup>

The monarchy's proximity to stars, notably in the show business equivalent of the trooping of the colour, marshalled for the end of Royal performances, celebrations and premieres can be

<sup>180</sup> The mantle of feminine excess was, in this instance born by actress Beverley Callard or '*Queen Liz III - she chats up Charles on Corrie debut*' (Kerr, 2000, p. 1). Far from reading the powerful potential iconoclasm of the feminine excess of the Queens of the Street Will Self and others chose to rehearse the mantra of gay male precedence in their critiques of this edition: "*Corrie with its cone-breasted, brassy heroines is one of our gayest icons, but until now no-one noticed how the cobbles on the street had become as camp as the Yellow Brick Road*" (Self, 2000, p. 12).

<sup>181</sup> For example, 'Queen Liz in the Queen Vic' (Rae, 2001, pp. 5-6) and 'It's so nice to meet a fellow Windsor, Babs' (Jagasi and Goulder, 2001, p. 3).

<sup>182</sup> Inevitably, much was made of Barbara Windsor and Pam St Clements being inappropriately decorated. Windsor was criticised for displaying her full MBE insignia, ribbon and all, "*a decoration normally reserved for formal dress occasions*" (ibid.) and St Clements in her 'Pat Evans' mode was ridiculed for her outsize earrings '*They're this big ma'am... Pat Evans lets the Queen in on all the details of her latest spectacular earrings*' (Jagasi and Goulder, 2001, p. 5). *The Express* sought to undermine Barbara Windsor further by criticising what the star had worn earlier that week when she had appeared at the long-running, starry Royal Variety Show. Windsor and Cilla Black had performed numbers where they were dressed as showgirls "*On Monday night at the Royal Variety performance Barbara was clad in little more than a sequinned basque*" (ibid. p. 3). This criticism attempted to indict Windsor's performance for lack of observance of the time-honoured protocols of the Show, where performers have habitually testified to having been honoured to appear and have observed due deference to the occupants of the Royal Box. The Show is a theatre based, televised production, where a roster of international cabaret style stars perform for an audience that traditionally includes the Queen. Windsor was underdressed for the Royal Variety performance and overdressed at the Queen's walkabout.

<sup>183</sup> Presciently, Windsor had had her name changed from Barbara Ann Deeks in Coronation year "*because it sounded posher*" (Bedell, 2002, p. 3). Babs Windsor was also recruited for TV promotions of the Jubilee Concert, launching the build-up to TV coverage announcing 'Seven days to go.' featured on the *BBC News* outside Buckingham Palace, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2002.

<sup>184</sup> In 2001 during her Stately Homes Tour Bassey played at Somerley House Hampshire, Tatton Park, Cheshire, Ragley Hall Warwickshire, Belvoir Castle, Lincs, Knebworth, Hertfordshire, and Blickling Hall, Norfolk. Bassey's hits, *Big Spender*, *Goldfinger*, *The Man with the Midas Touch*, *Diamonds are Forever* etc. express lyrically and in her performances of emotional extravagance, the lack of self consciousness about the desire for jewels and conspicuous display of wealth indicative of Vulgar/Royal Taste.





63. Elizabeth Taylor and Princess Margaret, in *Princess Margaret, a life of contrasts*, 2002, Christopher Warwick, unpaginated.



Dolly Parton and the Queen, in *The official Dolly Parton scrapbook*, 1977, Connie Berman, unpaginated.



Joan Collins and the Queen, in *The Independent*, undated.





64. Barbara Windsor curtsies to Shirley Bassey outside Buckingham Palace, in *Evening Times*, 19 July, 2000, page 4.



interpreted as satisfying star and audience desires to queen it. This most traditional of post-war Royal encounters, reproduced across print and TV media, inevitably generated images centred on the representation of the queen with an excessive female star, the representation of real and ersatz royalty. These intriguing and for audiences at least apparently endlessly satisfying vicarious encounters provide moments of twinned excess, with the fake increasingly threatening to eclipse the real.<sup>185</sup>

A further moment of Bahktian instability inheres in the awarding of the queen's honours to soap queens and other popular, excessive female icons. Royal watchers' anxiety over the vulgar excess and inappropriate fashioning of soap stars and contiguity between royals and commoners, can be seen to be justified in the barely contained exuberance of soap stars' queening it. When asked, Goodyear, long claimed as a lesbian by soap watching so-called lesbian communities "*declined to reveal what the queen had said to her*" on receiving her MBE in 1996. She stated, in a surely unintentional double entendre "*I don't kiss and tell – that's a secret*" (Unauthored news item, *Herald*, 21 February, 1996, p. 7). And in a carnivalesque moment in 2000, the so-called red-tops captured/staged an irreverent celebration, between Shirley Bassey and Barbara Windsor outside the Palace. Windsor was caught in mock curtsy to Bassey after the former was awarded an MBE and the latter made a Dame on the same day (*Evening Times*, July 19, 2000, p. 3).<sup>186</sup>

The barmaid or landlady, as characterised in performances by excessively fashioned queens Barbara Windsor, Anita Dobson, Julie Goodyear, Pam St Clements, Leticia Dean and Jessie Wallace is a mainstay of working-class nostalgia and soap fantasy and a caricatured figurehead for feminine excess. The barmaid character caught by the tabloids queening it with the Queen appears to represent the resolution of actual and vicarious fantasies by stars/characters and audiences respectively.<sup>187</sup> The British barmaid is emblematic of low, working-class, demonised and inappropriately fashioned femininity.<sup>188</sup> The anxiety not to resemble soap barmaids is raised in Ellen's half-joking comments:

<sup>185</sup> Royal watchers Talbot and Vaughn Thomas tone in the early 1960s suggested that this auratic distance had been vigilantly guarded "*When the film star Barbra Streisand at a premiere impertinently and tactlessly asked her [the queen] why she always wore them [gloves] Her Majesty was too polite to give the correct answer which was that she wore them because she had to shake hands with so many people like Barbra Streisand*" (Talbot and Vaughn Thomas, p. 101).

<sup>186</sup> Betty Driver, a former showgirl and long-term barmaid 'Betty' of the Rovers Return received her MBE and noted frankly "*It was lovely meeting the queen [...] she had this huge, gorgeous diamond bauble around her neck and I can remember thinking, 'Ooo I'd like that! Isn't that terrible!?'*" (Tweeddale, 2000, p. 36).

<sup>187</sup> Windsor and other excessive stars appear to want to impress with excess, in much the same way as some of the research participants, wearing their 'best' outfits, their 'best', and that may mean all of their jewellery, hence the donning of the full ribboned MBE. In his study on taste, Bourdieu notes that when asked how they would dress if asked out by their husband's boss 68% of his working-class respondents said they would wear their best clothes against only 19% of the wives of senior executives and professionals (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 249). For the cognoscenti, the spectacle of women wearing all their best garments and accessories is read as a sign of vulgar taste and low status.

<sup>188</sup> Although terms like bimbo, slapper and bitch are increasingly used ironically in youth culture, the phrase 'brassy bimbo' was being used in a derogatory way to describe Sharon Watts, then 'Queen of the Vic' in a survey of Scottish barmaids as late as 1992 (Brown, 1992, pp. 20-21). The soap script of an episode of *Eastenders* in 2002 played with the stereotype of the dumb, blonde barmaid. The Queen Vic barmaids are entered as a team into the pub quiz by the landlady's daughter, 'Sam'. Their title,





Dolly's curly, mountainous hairstyles have become her trademark.





I think that the jewellery is something that I don't even think about, I don't even think – I only notice because people do say to me, 'Fabulous earrings.' and then they laugh and they used to call me Bet Lynch, but I'd go, 'God she's so tasteless' but obviously they just meant because they were sparkly or whatever, now I keep thinking of Pat in East Enders

## Frozen, Outsider and Unauthorised fashion.

Feminist and mainstream critiques of women who fashion to excess have centred on notions of women duped by fashion industries and cultures of waste, of economic and sexual laxity. However, many stars beloved by participants and their own choices in self-fashioning betrayed little evidence of an awareness of fashion dictates. The model of excessive femininity defined by Taylor, Goodyear, Parton and others can be understood as forms of femininities anchored in nostalgia or in other ways resisting the momentum of fashion.<sup>189</sup> In some instances, as with Taylor, a star's excessive *body* and presumed sexuality is deemed 'out-of-date', when measured against a Modernist model.<sup>190</sup> Phoenix's persona and identifications were considered anachronistic by her producer. He considered her "*an actress in a time warp where the guiding light was the glitz and glamour of showbiz*" (Podmore and Reece, 1990, p. 28). However, the so-called failure of a female star to relinquish excessive glamour and subscribe to forms of Modernist fashion can be seen to be strategic and linked to assumptions about audiences' pleasures, as Parton has noted.<sup>191</sup>

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'The Dumb Blondes' unsettles landlady 'Peggy' (Barbara Windsor), Sam is given the line, "*Mum, it's ironical.*" (BBC 1, 25 November, 2003) This is reflected and reconstructed in an array of forms of popular culture, habitually through soap histories but can also be found as a metaphor for tartiness in girls annuals. For example, in a questionnaire, 'Do you mean what you say? Your Appearance' in the *Jackie* annual, 1977, girls were advised that a comment, "*That dress is really sexy.*" may conceal the 'insult', "*So long as you like looking like a barmaid*" (p.47).

Her low status and assumed remoteness from high cultural capital, underpins the joke behind a *Sunday Times* cover that depicted 'Bet Lynch' as the barmaid in a pastiche of Manet's, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*. (*Sunday Times*, 15 October, 1995)

Interestingly this exact formula was reprised in a *Radio Times* feature 'National Treasures' where TV stars were transposed into works of art; David Jason as the Laughing Cavalier, Jonathon Ross as Gainsborough's Blue Boy and Barbara Windsor behind the Bar at the Folies Bergere (Graham, 12-18 July, 2003).

<sup>189</sup> In a further resemblance to Royal fashionings.

<sup>190</sup> Maddox wrote of Taylor (and Burton) "*Sexually they had become anachronisms. Movie audiences were dominated by the under thirties, and by 1968, Taylor's brand of sex in particular had gone out of style. There she was in The Comedians in haute couture and teased hair, reeking doom, just as Vanessa Redgrave was removing her plain checked shirt and baring a bony chest to the camera in Blow-Up... The sexual revolution had come. Sex was a giveaway, not a dare. Nudity was honesty, while cleavage – the separation, but not the breasts – was meretricious*" (Maddox, 1977, p. 200).

<sup>191</sup> "*My gaudy artificial appearance has nothing to do with the kind of person I am. That's part of show business and show business is a phoney world anyway. So why not dress the part? I like to be different and I like people to pay attention. I just don't want to look like everybody else, I could be more stylish if I wanted to but I'm not aimin' to be fashionable. My hair is out of the 1960s. My clothes are fifties but nobody is goin' to change me I'm a kind of gaudy, Liberace type performer. I love my big hairdos. People are always pushin' me to change my look and I won't do it. It don't bother me. I like looking like I came out a fairytale.*

*The glare and the glitter is a gimmick – fun for the audience, fun for me, something we can share together. The way I look really captures people's attention.... I look totally one-way, but I am totally another. If people think I'm a dumb blonde because of the way I look then they are dumber than they think I am. If people think I am not very deep because of my wigs and my outfits then they are not very deep. I want people to like me, but if they can't see beyond all this, then that's their problem"* (Parton cited in Berman, 1977, p. 56). Parton's anti-fashion/nostalgic fashioning taste extends to her hair: "*Dolly Parton started wearing wigs in her late twenties. Before that she used to tease up her own hair. 'I love to tease up my hair. I remember when I was about fifteen, everybody was teasin up their hair and I always used to see how high and puffy I could make it. I used to love to bleach and tease my hair and have this big haired image. When my hairstyle went out of style I decided I would keep it anyway. Because I liked it*





*Julie Goodyear, with her Charles and Di earrings, hopes her Majesty is amused*

66. Julie Goodyear meets the Queen, 1983, in *Coronation Street, the inside story*, Bill Podmore and Peter Rice, 1990, page 68.



Writing in 1995 when 'Bet Lynch' retired from *Coronation Street*, Susan Irvine reflected on the therapeutic effect for audiences of her frozen fashioning. She claimed the character as the

archetypal barmaid of the Seventies, a figure seemingly frozen in time yet still gripping to the millions of viewers of both sexes and all classes who are aghast that she filmed her last *Coronation Street* finale this week. Why the fuss? Perhaps it's down to the British penchant for nostalgia. Life has changed, and so have women, but Bet Lynch, tart with a heart, is a reassuring rock, a weekly dose of regression therapy in an alienating world (Irving, 1995, p. 17).<sup>192</sup>

### Frozen fashions in jewellery

'Bet Lynch' style jewellery, what Ellen terms 'danglers' (earrings depicting Charles and Di, Creoles or knives and forks) shares an aesthetic similarity with the products to be found in jewellers in Glasgow's East End and other urban centres and in shopping catalogues, that is, in being literal, unfunctional, unidentifiable as being the work of a specific designer or design group and being a miniature.<sup>193</sup> Romanticism, nostalgia, a non ironic notion of Royal Taste that is ambiguously un/related to notions of Monarchism and mock Victoriana are all characteristics found in the field that are antithetical to both Modernism and feminism. Unlike fashionable products, cheap jewellery's marketing is virtually imperceptible; products are sold with almost warehouse style perfunctoriness via independent outlets and catalogue shopping and products are not associated with a designer's name or a company's reputation although a notion of craft and authenticity is emphasised.<sup>194</sup> But *Argos* and *Index*

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and I knew it would get attention. I just like the way it looks on me. And I am only a small person, only five feet. So I wear a lotta hair, with it piled up high to offset that'" (ibid.).

<sup>192</sup> The excessive styling of both film and soap stars has been traced by some commentators in the wilful and fearsome night time fashionings of young working-class women. Fawcett has linked the 'hyper-femininity' of Newcastle's current young women out on 'the toon' to a canon of fashioning characterised by northern soap queens and grants them a parodic agency that exceeds the limits of fashion: "Such minimal clothing as described is highly impractical in the predominantly chill Newcastle nights and at times appears to parody the images of fashion and femininity that dominate the popular media. Skirts are often that bit shorter, that bit tighter than on the pages of *More* or *Just Seventeen*, cleavages that bit lower, hair that bit blonder and bigger, alluding to Pamela Anderson rather than Kate Moss. This stylisation could be read on one level as heterosexual camp, a hyper-femininity that carries a disorientating visual power and positions women centre stage in the contemporary urban landscape. Such emphatically signalled femininity is tied to traditional working-class female identities, as represented by characters such as Bet Lynch in ITV's long-running soap *Coronation Street*." (Fawcett, 2002, p. 138). Fawcett discusses the sexualisation of Newcastle's young women, who are frequently caricatured and homogenised in unsympathetic journalism. This is borne out in the comments of Wainwright who reads them as "predatory gangs [...] on the lookout for lager, a kebab and the chance to score" (Wainwright, 2001, p. 13).

<sup>193</sup> A tiny percentage of which self-consciously aims to reflect fashion. In his research examining what and why people place art objects on their walls Painter discovered a higher ratio of unfunctional design objects used in the working-class domestic context than in middle-class homes. Painter noted the "combination of apparent practical utility with visual embellishment [...] a barometer shaped as a guitar, or a thermometer as an anchor" (Painter, undated.) As in my examination of jewellery design, the objects owned by working-class households frequently merely alluded to being functional. Painter also notes the preponderance of objects I associate with Royal Taste; embossed brass plates, imitation shields, crossed swords etc. "All these had a significant 'decorative' or 'symbolic' aspects and usually carried images or motifs" (ibid.)

<sup>194</sup> This also reflected Painter's findings that there was little evidence in working-class homes of any interest having been taken in "those aspects of objects with which the fine art world is normally concerned." (ibid.) Working-class householders were generally unaware of signatures, labels stamps or trademarks on the objects in their home "It seemed clear that who an object might have been made by, or how it had been made had not engaged interest" (Painter)





67. *Argos*, Spring/Summer, 2003, page 671



*Argos*, Spring/Summer, 2003, page 677



*Index, Spring/Summer, 2003, page 54*



*Index, Spring/Summer, 2003, page 39*



(2002) catalogues demonstrate the scale and variety of low-cost jewellery available.<sup>195</sup> *Argos* was cited by the self-consciously cultured participant Ellen and style journalists Sherwood and Bedell as a knowing joke; as absolutely synonymous with low and cheap taste, a catalogue counterpart to discredited retailers Ratners.<sup>196</sup> In the course of my research examining the products displayed by independent jewellers in Glasgow's East End and *Argos* and *Index* catalogues, I found common often miniaturised forms and objects; hearts, dolphins, flowers, wishbones, guardian angels, moons and stars, buckles, teddy bears, knots, clowns keys and horseshoes were ubiquitous.<sup>197</sup> Some symbolic devices were also common although still rendered in a realist rather than abstract way; in this case: crosses and crucifixes, Claddags, laurel leaves, 'horns of life', initials, and birthstones. The stylings constitute discrete vernaculars 'Victorian', 'Gypsy', 'Bamboo', 'Rennie Mac', 'Filigree', 'Creole' and so on. Some products reflected all or multiple characteristics.<sup>198</sup> 'Timeless', nostalgic or specifically 'Victorian' styled items proliferated, for example *Argos* offered forty-three types of lockets. Participants' accounts of jewellery having a sentimental value linked to loved ones, as gifts from family members is in fact made explicit in some designs. For example, the array of products and 'collections' that literally spelt out, 'Mum', 'Auntie', 'Daughter', 'Sister' - the gendered nature of these products was absolute - whilst others stated 'Best Mum', 'Precious Godchild', 'Daddy's Little Girl' and 'Special Daughter'.<sup>199</sup>

Contemporary, popular domestic decorations illustrate both the dislocation of realist miniaturism from Modernism but also the possibilities for invention and pleasure in their production

<sup>195</sup> The *Index* catalogue alone featured 103 pages of jewellery.

<sup>196</sup> *Argos* is used as a synonym for naffness by the broadsheets as in Sherwood's recent piece hailing the New Vulgarly entitled? 'Tiffany Heart? I'd rather have a neck chain from Argos' (Sherwood, 1999, p. 1). A discussion on this thesis with the fashion designer Kerry Spring triggered treasured memories of pleasurable evenings we had spent independently as girls, often with parents or other adults (in my own case babysitting for an Aunt who catalogue shopped), leafing through *Argos*, ticking garments, jewellery and other products that would never be bought.

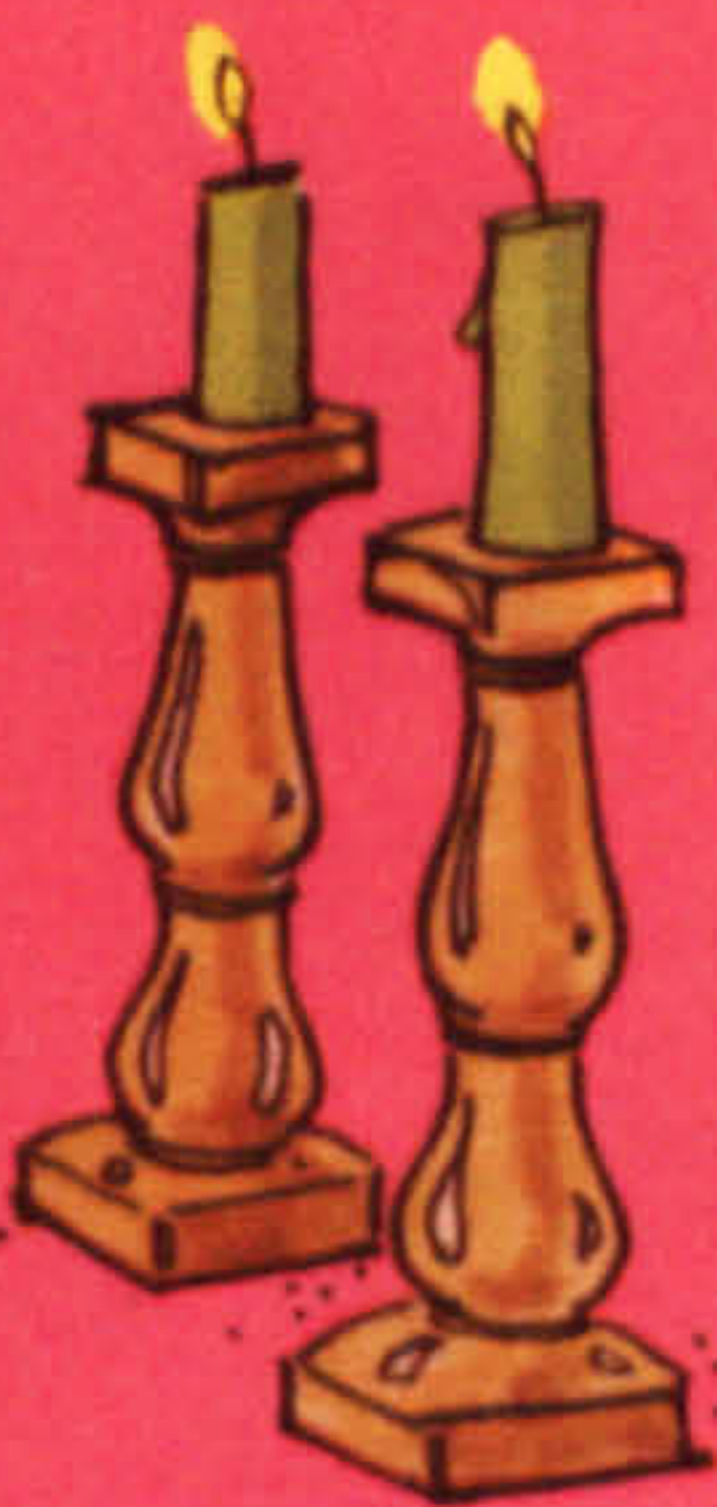
<sup>197</sup> These are specific to women's jewellery although men's jewellery is equally literal featuring miniature footballs and boots, boxing gloves, calculators, motorbikes, anchors, lions, skull and crossbones, dragons snakes and so on. Mock Royal references were abundant, for example: 'The Court Wedding Ring. Introduced in Victorian Times' (*Index*) 'Sovereign' jewellery of every description, 'Cleopatra style' bracelets and 'Prince of Wales' chains (*Argos*) and 'Princess-cut zirconium cluster' rings (*Index*).

<sup>198</sup> For example, 'Victorian' style scroll pendants containing messages in musical presentation boxes that play 'Love Story' when opened, Heart shaped 'split' pendants of which there were 15 variations in the *Argos* catalogue where the heart inscribed 'Big Sister'/'Little Sister' or 'Best Friend' is as if broken in two, to be worn by two people, rings, pendants or bracelets where family photos could be reproduced in porcelain.

<sup>199</sup> In a memo I noted: "Noticed for the first time in late July 2001 that girls on Trongate were wearing hooped earrings with their names in gold written across the diameter". Black hip-hop superstar Missy Elliot wore a comparable style, with the initial 'M' across the hoop in the promotional photos for the sleeve of 'Under Construction' (Elliot, 2002). In many of these themes, forms and motifs contemporary working class-jewellery repeats and stylistically evokes a model established in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century when "The most common type of silver brooch [...] was the name brooch." (Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, 2003) The patterns of acquisition are also interesting to note since "These brooches were often given as presents to young women in working-class families. Other brooches bore the simple inscription, 'Mother' or 'Baby'" (ibid). Cheap, machine-made silver jewellery had gradually proliferated from 1860, after the discovery of enormous deposits of silver in Nevada and by the end of the century had become available to the working class. In 1890 duty on all silverware was abolished. According to the curators of the exhibition, *Sentimental Silver Jewellery*: "The relief given by this tax concession led to the beginning of the trinket trade producing small pieces of sentimental jewellery for the popular market" (ibid.) Items of popular, working-class jewellery from the extensive Hull Grundy Gift indicate the widespread use of symbolism and styles found in the *Argos* and *Index* collections; hearts, anchors, lucky horseshoes, lockets, and motifs and designs connoting friendship and love and, latterly, the incorporation of photographic portraits in brooches, lockets and pendants (ibid.) .



# Viva Victoriana!



Brass candlesticks still grace the tables of many homes today and, depending on their quality, can be bought from £7 upwards in antique shops.



In Victorian times, lamps only served the purpose of giving out light but nowadays they are used as ornaments and enhance the look of any room, whether lighted or not.



The penny-farthing bicycle, invented in 1870 by James Starley of Coventry, is making a comeback. A certain Mitcham man is now making them in adult and children size.



Most "Snow-Scene" toys come from Japan and Hong Kong nowadays, although some are made in Austria.

They were, however, a pleasing feature of Victorian drawing rooms—as an ornament rather than a toy—and are thought to have originated in Russia or China in the 1850's.

Some authorities, Pollock's Toy Museum in particular, think the idea could go back to the ancient Egyptians.

Traditionally they are made from water and glycerine with flakes of cuttle-fish floating inside but modern versions employ substitutes such as plastic flakes.

There are several types of "Snow Scene" but in most cases the base is sealed as a 'lid' after the glass dome has been filled. Alternatively there may be a small hole left in the base which is sealed with a cork after filling.

During the 1800's, china dogs really came into vogue and were treated as family heirlooms. Later they were thrown away. However, a renewed interest is being shown in them by lovers of Victoriana.





and consumption. The array of miniaturised ornamentation created in the spirit of Victoriana can only be hinted at here. Indubitably, Victoriana remains a ubiquitous signifier of taste for working-class jewellery consumers.<sup>200</sup> Addressing the perennial appeal of sentimental and miniature ornament, Stewart has noted that, “*We cannot separate the function of the miniature from the nostalgia for pre-industrial labour, a nostalgia for craft.*” And, discussing the importance of Victoriana twinned with miniaturism she suggests that:

Contemporary dollhouses are distinctly not contemporary; it is probably not accidentally that it is the Victorian period which is presently so popular for reproduction in miniature, not only because that period’s obsession with detail and materiality is so analogous to the miniatures general functions, but also because Victorian modes of production presented the height of transformation of nature into culture (Stewart, 1993, p. 68).<sup>201</sup>

Further, Stewart has situated the miniature (such as the make-at-home mock Faberge egg, or the vernacular of popular jewellery) “*at a place of ending. The productions of the hobbyist: knickknacks of the domestic collected by elderly women [...] viewed from a transcendent position, a position which is always within the standpoint of present lived reality and which thereby always nostalgically distances its object*” (Stewart, 1993, p. 69).<sup>202</sup>

The consumption of this unauthored material out of time with fashion nevertheless is undertaken with a consciousness of it.<sup>203</sup> Research participants Ann and Ellen commented that their jewellery wearing was so habitual as to make them feel bare without their routinely worn items, suggesting resistance to the vagaries of fashion and commitment to a look forged years before. This

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<sup>200</sup> Jean’s working-class aspirations to be cultured were articulated in her pride in consuming antiques, creating a home that resembled a Victorian salon: “*I think I pick up a lot of stuff through buying older things, visiting flea markets, antique shops you know, all that kind of thing. I get influenced by older stuff, 20s stuff, the colours, Victorian stuff and I’ve tended to just take from that and put it into action, if you know what I mean*”.

<sup>201</sup> Stewart identifies the peculiar appeal of dolls houses in fulfilling this function. In 2003, *The People* devoted a page to a new doll’s house modelled as a miniature version of ‘Beckingham Palace’ the tabloid’s dubbing for David and Victoria Beckham’s mansion. Suitably, the doll’s house is on show at the Marquess of Bath’s estate Longleat (Kemp, 2003, p. 35).

<sup>202</sup> In her illuminating book, *On Longing*, Stewart contrasts miniaturism with gigantism as typified in the work of Pop artists Oldenburg, Rosenquist and Warhol, where, in opposition to the characteristics of the miniature the: “*gigantic in pop art celebrates the proliferation of the new [...] The pop gigantic exists in the abstract space of mass production. The human body is not gigantic here the image is [...] it exists in an abstract and autonomous space, a space of the façade, of consumption without ‘meaning’*” (Stewart, 1993, p. 93).

<sup>203</sup> The *Argos* and *Index* catalogues contain a huge volume of modernist inspired and designer products from mobile phones to white goods. A memo in the field also noted the routinised incongruity of jewellery excess worn with designer garments (e.g. Burberry skip caps and Nike trainers with Victorian Creoles and sovereign medallions) viewed on women of all ages in the *passaggiata* of Glasgow’s Trongate.





69. Trongate shopper, June, 2003, photo: Adele Patrick.



form of fashion dissidence, a resistance to fashion and a preference for excess is reflected in the tastes of many participants and the fashioning of post war film and TV queens.<sup>204</sup>

### Working-class rogue fashionings

Whereas since 1966 the notion of the designer product intensified self-consciousness about fashioning lifestyle and habitus, a trajectory of unauthored, outsider fashioning can be seen to have developed that emphasised the characteristics anathema to Modernism, e.g. decoration, ornament and preferably glittering detail. In a British context, as I have argued, the notion of Royal Taste may have impacted on the imagination of some girls and women growing up in the post-war period, as did the exuberant excesses of stars like Taylor however, forms of American vernacular ornate costuming and fashioning also shaped a rogue, outsider strand of British fashioning to excess.<sup>205</sup>

In many of the fields where feminine excess was a definitive aspect of a culture, including country and western vernacular fashioning appears styled as a form of Victoriana, a subset being ‘fairytale’ or in other ways anachronistic. I noted that this was a feature of the encrusted worlds profiled in girls’ annuals where ‘flamenco’ was a spectacle dislocated from any historical moorings and where editors reassured readers that “*Fashion changes hardly affect the dress required for the ballroom dancer*” (Frank, 1962, pp. 21- 24).

In a further departure from Modernism’s championing of an androgynous youthful ideal, (and in contrast for example to an aspect of conservatism of independent music genres) forms of feminine excess, including forms of popular dance and performance are frequently performed by women of all ages and sizes. In her foray into the circus Birkett noted “*My age did not matter; showgirls were always girls [...] showgirls don’t exist they are created. Anyone could be made into a showgirl, even*

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<sup>204</sup> Maddox notes that “*Taylor herself accepted the charge. She would sit in an armchair, wagging her Krupp. ‘I know I’m vulgar’*” (Maddox, 1977, p. 213). I am not suggesting that Taylor’s knowing ownership of the term is in any way linked to my understanding of how participants’ understood their fashioning or taste. Rather, Taylor’s exposure to and awareness of both popular, Modernist and indeed Royal Taste endowed her with the insight to make this claim. I read this as exceeding the limitations of camp, suggesting a pride in rather than a critique of feminine excess.

<sup>205</sup> For example, cowboy, country and western and line dancing forms where Parton and Wynette have followed queen’s from the 1940s on like Dale Evans in coining a form of working-class glamour. In Dale Evans obituary she was remembered as “*Sporting an outfit of fringes, satin and studs she was Queen to Roy Rogers ‘King of the Cowboys’*” (Bergan, 2001). Line dancing, ballroom, Dancesport and disco dancing, seedbeds of outsider working-class forms of feminine excess are inevitably routinely disparaged or neglected as valid cultural territories, other than when they are appropriated for ironic, high fashion purposes. These are highly exoticised fields and all have fostered alternative retail outlets for costuming. None observe mainstream fashion trends although their devotees are typically young women. Latin ballroom and Dancesport reference Latin and Roma cultures in body fashioning and costuming. Country and Western dance forms are disproportionately popular in Scotland and the North of England. Two girls from Buckie recently won a world title at the International Country dance championships in the US (*Herald*, 11 Jan, 2003, p. 5).

In an article charting the improbable successes of the South Empsall Dance Group, Peter Davies notes that girls “*marooned between Wakefield and Doncaster*” in an impoverished environment (“*Cashless society? This is it literally*”) came to represent Britain at the 1996 International Youth Dance Festival attended by 2000 dancers from 47 countries and won. (Davies, 1996, p. 6).





70. 'A's grandma with faux leopard-skin collar meets the Queen, Doncaster, early 1970s.



me” (Birkett, 1996, p. 6) <sup>206</sup> In contrast to the ageism/sexism clearly operating in the independent and alternative music fields, Shirley Bassey and other excessive stars have maintained their star status and their (prerogative to perform) sexuality. In a review of Bassey’s performance at Manchester’s Arena, celebrating her ‘Golden Jubilee’ in 2003 Simpson wrote “*The biggest surprise is her sexuality; not just the expected nudge-wink of Hey Big Spender, but the stirring sexual volcano she brings to the Doors Light My Fire. It’s alarming but exciting to discover a 66-year-old is sexier than Kylie*” (Simpson, 2003, p. 28).

## 6.6 Conclusion: Queening it and faking it

Other countries can’t decide whether we’re a nation of football hooligans or homosexuals, of princesses or slags. Because we are all and none of these things ( Sawyer, 2001, p. 66).

In this concluding section I want to reprise and highlight a final cultural correlation: between perceptions of the working class as prone to deception and fakery on a range of registers and the middle class as arbiters of taste and authenticity. The paradigm of authenticity and naturalness versus artifice and masquerade imbricates both the literature on femininity and feminism and notions of class and taste. In the field of jewellery, historical notions of good precious metals and stones and bad fakes and costume jewellery still predominating in the immediate post war period, have been radically transformed in recent decades. Hollywood and show business paste, the self consciousness of stealth wealth aesthetics, the appropriation of Royal Taste, the diminution of the Royal aura, and the consumption of fakes by Royals themselves have all destabilised formally normative values.<sup>207</sup> In 1963, although costume jewellery was gaining respectability as it grew more indistinguishable from the real, girls were still being advised to avoid junk.<sup>208</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Perhaps the most spectacular evidence for this exists in the form of the showgirl troupe the ‘Roly Polys’.

<sup>207</sup> Such encroachments on a Royal prerogative to dress to excess are prefigured in a range of working-class communities and represent a widespread ‘will to adorn’. In dramatic fashion, the culture of Pearly Kings and Queen’s is sustained in London’s East End. As Mary Braid has detailed, Pearly Kings and Queens evolved their own family button designs including George Major, the latest in a line of five generations of lives “*spent in buttons*”. Jade, Major’s granddaughter, is “*The first back Pearly Princess*” And Major, one of the remaining 150 or so Pearlies has stated, distilling the essence of Vulgar/Royal Taste, “*We are out there to create a little glitter*”(Braid, 2001, pp. 1-2).

<sup>208</sup> As in this annual extract: “*Costume jewellery is the miracle of the age and it takes a diamond expert with his eyeglass to tell a rhinestone from a family heirloom at 20 paces. But don’t let the temptation to shine tempt you into competition with a lighthouse. The rule about glitter is very simple – a little goes a long, long way. One eye-catching bracelet and brooch is OK. Ear studs, if they suit you, go nicely with a necklace. Too much glitter will overload you and detract rather than add to your charms. Warning: if loving parents have given you a real gold bracelet don’t mix it up with the ‘junk’ type. It can’t compete and will be sunk without a trace in a welter of fakes*” (Green, 1963, pp. 35-41). In a *Guardian* Women’s Page interview with Brigid Brophy



By 2001, Kenneth Jay Lane's fakes, resonating with the zeitgeist of early post-modernism and associated with celebrity clientele, were valued more highly than originals. Significantly, Princess Diana developed a "*penchant for costume jewellery*" earning the epithet, 'The Princess of Paste' (Chubb, 1992, p. 50). Simon Butler of Butler and Wilson, the faux jewellers who translated the Lane legacy for the upmarket British high street in the 1980s identified Diana's importance in encouraging the middle classes to experiment with imitations: "*Any stigma that there may have been about wearing imitation jewellery has been demolished by the Princess of Wales, who is perfectly happy to wear her rhinestones for public engagements*" (Butler cited in Chubb, 1992, p. 59).<sup>209</sup>

The notion of non-ironic imitation jewellery wearing as stigmatising can be understood in the broader demonisation of working-class women and their consumption and/or tastes. In the way that use of cosmetics to excess was read in mainstream and some feminism texts as indicative of (self-) deception and sexually laxity, wearing excessive costume jewellery or gaudy clothing as in McLean's description of habitués of the Barras, is read off as a sign of proximity to criminality. Jewellery theft has both a romantic, literary as well as criminal legacy, compounding the connection of jewels to the underworld. In a bathetic conclusion to the death of Princess Diana, the Glasgow *Evening Times* reported an inconclusive police raid on a Barras stallholder's home, in 'Hunt for Di Mum's jewels'<sup>210</sup> (Brenton, 2002, p. 4). The visibility of predominately working-class jewellery items as currency in the pawn industry further stigmatises these items as low.<sup>211</sup>

Notwithstanding Diana's fashionable favouring of faux jewels, the aristocracy can be seen to continue to use authentic jewels as a flamboyant presentation of Royal Taste and aura. The mythology of specific pieces conjoins with a romanticisation of lineage and sovereignty.<sup>212</sup>

The reconstruction of the modern monarchy, that staged and fashioned the Windsors in ways evocative of a mythical past is, through the agency of politics, media and the rise of new queens gradually perceived as being more dependent on artifice than aura. As notions of real and fake become

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the following year the writer 'confesses' that her husband has taught her the pleasures of costume jewellery: "*Before I met Michael [Levey, Art Historian] I would never have bought fake jewellery for the sheer pleasure of it. [...] I can be the most dreadful puritan at heart*" (*The Guardian*, 5 February, 1964, p. 8).

<sup>209</sup> New Romanticism and punk may also have been a factor in dissolving the rigid demarcation of good and bad, real and fake jewellery. Costume jewellery is conspicuously worn by Boy George in his eponymously titled *Fashion and Makeup* girls' annual of 1984.

<sup>210</sup> Mrs Shand Kydd having had her home raided whilst attending the trial of Diana's butler Paul Burrell.

<sup>211</sup> Associations with pawn shops are perennially derogatory. Landlady character Annie Walker asked her son Billy who had hired Bet Lynch: "*Am I biased? Or does that name sound as if it should be over a pawn shop?*" (McAuley, 1995, p. 23).

<sup>212</sup> Robb and Edwards have inferred that for the monarchy the family jewels are viewed as commonplace family inheritances: "*One [of the Queen's] brooches incorporates the third and fourth parts of the Cullinan diamond which the Queen inherited from Queen Mary who had it made up into what is now the queen's most valuable brooch. This priceless piece has a 62 carat square diamond from which hangs a pear shaped diamond of 92 carats and is lightly referred to by the queen as 'Granny's chips'*" (Robb and Edwards, 1977, p. 59).



more problematised, and the uses and appropriations of Royal Taste proliferate, the prerogative of queening it has been wilfully claimed by specific stars and audiences alike.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> The phrase 'queening it' is the Prince of Wales'. According to Robb "[State occasions] *are the occasions when the Queen puts on the style which Prince Charles is said to refer to as 'dressing up and Queening it'*" (Robb, 1997, p. 65).



## 7 Conclusion

One of the aims for this thesis was to contribute to feminist knowledge of femininity, media and women's (pleasures in) self-fashioning.<sup>1</sup> Whilst recognising the totalising effect of social and cultural distaste for (working-class) women who fashion to excess, I also acknowledged the momentum of individuated and collective pleasures in fashioning and suggest that the research participants' contributions add valuable perspectives to feminist research in this respect.<sup>2</sup>

Glamour, masquerade and questions of authenticity have been the focus for criticism in both mainstream and feminist discourses on female performers and their audiences. I claim that there may be a broader array of relationships between women consumers, audiences and stars that can galvanise profound feelings, identifications, creativity and dissidence.<sup>3</sup> This research attributes agency to so-called ordinary women and critically disdained but popular stars in the forging of new forms of expressions of femininity some of which can be understood as challenging the post-war foundations of taste and culture.

Feminist theory has failed to reflect on how Modernist, middle-class tastes may have impacted on feminist theories of the performance of femininity and on feminist taste itself, and I have attempted to examine the consequences of this political inertia, alongside a critique of the neglect of dissidence found in some forms of feminine excess.<sup>4</sup> In this conclusion I reflect on these findings and focus on the areas where the research might be seen to add to feminist knowledge. I review my analysis of the empirical data, its relationship to the existing literature and attempt to frame this within relevant contemporary media and urban landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup> Conducting this research has made me want to propose further analyses of what I would now term *cultural justice*, in particular where this might further illuminate the disdained practices of women who remain remote from cultural capital.

<sup>2</sup> Their accounts detail, for example, pleasures in aspects of music consumption and production, identifications with stars and other women on the basis of their fashionings and performances of excess and tastes for dissident femininities that have been largely neglected in British Second-Wave feminist theories and media.

<sup>3</sup> Defiance and disobedience has been attributed to specific forms of fashioned femininity but traditionally these tend to accord with aspects of Modernist taste, for example, in the representation and criticism of so-called alternative twentieth century female film and music stars.

<sup>4</sup> I hope to have demonstrated that femininity can be examined other than through a camp, drag or queer lens. I have not focussed here on tensions between specific communities of gay men, lesbians and women who 'do' femininity 'straight', however I am interested to note dissident work currently being undertaken by gay performers Jenni Potter and David Hoyle, aka Bitz and Bobz who have created work, for example 'Drag is Dead' that critiques the "*rampant hostility towards women [that] infects gay male culture*" (Gray, 2000, p. 4).



## Corporeal and cultural capital<sup>5</sup>

The science of taste and of cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable 'choices', such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle. This barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption abolishes the opposition, which has been the basis of high aesthetics since Kant, between the 'taste of sense' and the 'taste of reflection' and between facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, and pure pleasure, pleasure purified of pleasure, which is predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man [sic] (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 6).

The fields of research, academia and the voluntary sector I inhabited during the research period constitute culturally and socially distinct 'frontiers'. My understanding is that women who are usually located more or less discretely within these and other contexts, regardless of age, class and politics embody shifting tastes in fashioning that are equally and continually constructed. It is the distinguishing characteristics of apparatus, methods of fashioning, styling, levels of excess and ingenuousness about cosmetic acts that appears to determine cultural dis/pleasures and dis/approbation and consequent cultural capital.

Feminist and left political critiques of fashioning have focussed on the iniquities of the fashion industries and the culpability of the masses in the processes of exploitation and waste.<sup>6</sup> Such critiques have failed to include the routines of consumption associated with other lifestyles and dispositions, both academic and feminist. This research suggests that fashion and fashioning are not synonymous and that working-class communities of women are investing relatively little on beauty products and enjoying often affordable pleasures that exceed the narrow perception of cosmetic acts. It also finds that classed communities of women consume differently; working-class women can at least in some respects be understood as relying less on both advertising industries, to whom they have been routinely been perceived to be hopelessly in thrall, and fashion itself.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, despite encompassing habits

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<sup>5</sup> Corporeal capital is interpreted by Skeggs as within the frame of cultural capital defined by Bourdieu (Skeggs, 2001, p. 296). She suggests that femininity is both an achievement and an investment, a rare form of capital accessible to working-class women. (ibid. p. 298)

<sup>6</sup> There is a widespread perception of working-class women as folk devils as the literature on Essex Girls and my examination of Chatham Girls and Barras Tarts suggests.

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu's research claimed that working-class women are more likely to buy clothes from markets or through the post whereas bourgeois women are more likely to spend more on fashion consuming garments in up-market department stores and boutiques (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 378) Similarly working-class women were more likely to reduce their expenditure on cosmetics and beauty care to minimum (this item rising steeply through the classes). They represented "*the zero degree of make-up of which the*





71. Madonna wears Argos-style necklace with ironic air-brushed roots, cover, *In Style* magazine, August, 2001.



Madonna endorses the 'porno look', *The Tatler*, 2001, Vol. 296, Issue 11, unpaginated.



of resistance to both fashion and advertising, it is from within the habitus' of the working classes that the most canonised, dissident models for post-war fashion have emerged; the New Look, Bohemianism, bouffanting, Trailer Trash, Mods, Rockers, British Cowboy culture and so on. A rare example of appreciation of the dissidence and beyond-fashion status of outsider working-class fashioning has been cited by the artist Linder Sterling who has researched and celebrated rather than appropriated the line-dancing cultures of the north west of England:

There are the pure line-dancing clubs and then there are the clubs towards the coast that also attract members of the British Western Society. You have cowboys and line dancers but often there is little interaction between them. The cowboys look down on the line dancers. But the line dancers really don't care because they are having such a great time themselves. It is a fascinating world. One rainy night a few weeks ago I had to find this club where I knew the cowboys would be. I was driving round on my own and finally found this little tiny club went in and everyone was in full dress. I think that is radical because the venues are often in really obscure places and the people who are into it have actually made what they are wearing. There hasn't been a DIY fashion since punk – after punk the labels moved in. Punk was the last big movement when people got out sewing machines and felt tip pens and ripped things up. I think with line dancing in the north there's a fantastic disregard for the world outside – it's as if Gap and Calvin Klein really didn't exist. It's something incredibly liberating (Sterling cited in O'Brien, 2000).<sup>8</sup>

However it is the relentless pattern of appropriation, gentrification and (re)commodification of aspects of working-class culture, from fish and chips to allotmenting, tower blocks to narrow boats, ironically escalating in the wake of Thatcherism, that characterises the paradoxical exoticisation and disdain of 'the other' by the design and fashion cognoscenti.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, participants discussed pleasures in fashioning forms beyond the notion of fashionability, of long dresses, gallus earrings, Pre-Raphaelite tresses, butterfly brooches and loyalties to fixed fashioning regimes.

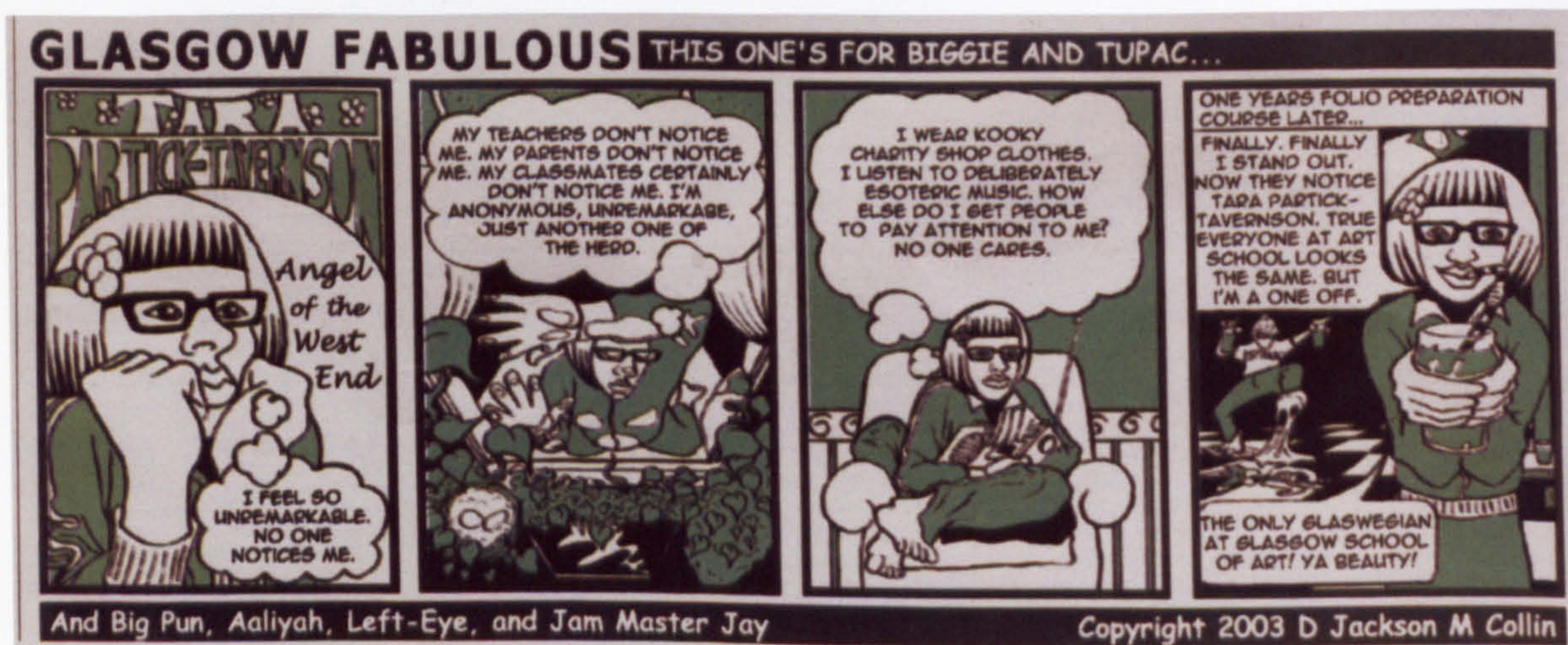
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*complexity (lipstick alone, lipstick plus foundation, plus eyeshadow, plus eyebrow pencil etc.) [...] the cost in money, and especially in time, increase as one moves up the social hierarchy"* (ibid. p. 378).

<sup>8</sup> Sterling claims that "People who usually feel anonymous or ignored will be named and elevated to gallery status. I am making work which lots of different people can relate to - dismantling the status of art" (ibid.). She makes a case for line-dancing's anti-consumerist potential: "It echoes punk in that it's always in obscure clubs and people make their own clothes. Men and women sit at sewing machines to get their image together. There's no Armani, Nike or Gap - all labels are banished". Sterling, a Liverpudlian, was born in 1954 into an Irish working-class family. Her parents go ballroom dancing six nights a week. She claims "my mum's always sewing sequins on something". According to O'Brien, Sterling "Gives short shrift to the 'culture of irony' in Brit pop art. She may be dressed up as a cowboy, but she isn't kitsch". She resents art that is "contemptuous of its audience... the legacy of punk has bred a lot of envy in people who'd like to be pretenders to punk's throne. Punk was never funded and never subsidised. Also, we trusted no one". O'Brien interprets Linderland as "highly unfashionable" and Sterling herself defines it as "about faith and politics and community, a world where the terrain is harsh and people are volatile, but deep down they're concerned with real choices of survival" (ibid.).

<sup>9</sup> In this the mechanisms resemble the post-war effects of globalisation and the universal disdain for folk cultures appropriated for tourism. It is indubitably the case that the middle classes constitute and construct the (high) fashion industries and their tastes are articulated in fashion journalism.





72. Strip cartoon, D Jackson and M Collin, *List* magazine, 2-16 October 2003, page 84.



Models of wilful artifice and dissident femininity exist in a host of social contexts and popular cultural and media representations as participants discussed, and secondary sources suggest. However, for the cognoscenti, including the students of art, fashion and design, it has been the stars of the avant-garde, punk, queer and alternative fields who are more routinely understood as having coined the celebrated models of post-war dissident fashions.<sup>10</sup>

The remoteness of art and design cultures<sup>11</sup> and higher education more generally from the worlds of working-class women was noted throughout the research process.<sup>12</sup> The accounts of some research participants literally marked the difference between themselves and the cultures and embodiment of 'students'.

Ettie: - we were brought up in a tenement first of all, above the shop, then we moved to St Georges Road, the road that leads down to - it's quite near the Art Institute. I went to school up at the Art Institute. I went to Garnethill Convent right next to the Art Institute. I saw all these hippies and things going in, and I thought, oh they are away in to doodle on paper.

Ellen, who had worked at the Art School for over a decade, was wary about its current claims to be 'widening access' to allow for the inclusion of forms of excessive femininity:<sup>13</sup>

Ellen: I think because it, it is the Art School, it's a bit like all these welders that come in and being painters and things, it's a bit like, 'women are the beggars of the world' type thing, let's have a token - I think they are quite good at embracing the token whatever, black, the token Barra Tart, the token whatever, I don't think they would like it if lots of them came [Laughter] no they wouldn't, that would upset the status quo and I think it would be quite hard to have - I suppose [...] a sort of, very sort of brash, working-class, type of woman and I think they have kind of got that in - but I think they would probably get laughed at, I think they would.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In their literal artfulness, often faking or blurring their class histories, rock, punk and hippy icons have all routinely milked the dynamism and dissidence of working-class and fashionings from Black communities.

<sup>11</sup> to which rebels from Lennon, to Strummer and McLaren to Blur et al were exposed.

<sup>12</sup> Significantly a 'critical friend' throughout the research period was researching issues of access at the Glasgow School of Art. She helped 'snowball' my access to Northend College, a 'feeder' institution to the Art School. She noted that the gatekeeper at Northend (her friend) had discussed her discomfort at 'grooming' female Northend Art and Design students for their portfolio interviews at the Art School. The feminine excess, of their 'best' interview outfits had been perceived by at least one female Northend candidate as posing a 'problem' at interview. The gatekeeper's knowledge of both Art School expectations (she was an Art School graduate herself) was sharply contrasted with the corporeal capital of Northend students, a gap she had to work to address in addition to any routine portfolio preparation.

This remoteness of excessive femininity from higher education is inferred by Cox when she states "*So maybe the Mail on Sunday's answer to the question 'Whatever happened to Essex girl?' will be proved right - 'That she grew up and became a university project'. And maybe that won't be such a ludicrous idea after all*" (Cox, 2000, p. 9).

<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the commitment of individual members of staff to this policy.

<sup>14</sup> My own observations of the mechanisms of corporeal capital at work in higher education as opposed to the research field more broadly confirmed this dislocation. Students were encultured into a Darwinian rhetoric that fused notions of progress and evolution with fashion and taste. As Bourdieu suggests: "*Anyone who wants to 'succeed in life' must pay for his accession to everything which defines truly humane humans by a change of nature, a 'social promotion' experienced as an ontological promotion, a process of 'civilisation'*" (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 251). This is inferred in a *Guardian* graduates supplement where the contiguity between cultures of education and the professions is expressed via the suppression of fashioning (mainly feminine)



As I have discussed, the critique of excessive fashioning as literally made-up, a retrograde form of masquerade has been held by tastemakers, Modernists and feminists alike as opposed to the authenticity of the unadorned or the perennial exception, a 'natural' decorativeness embodied by vogues for so-called gypsy, hippy or ethnic aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> Research participants were, on the whole, open about their past and current identifications, with stars, friends, strangers and relatives, even in the plans they made for influencing the fashioning of their daughters. Two participants who identified as feminists were less keen to confess their susceptibility to fashioning influences and I linked their reticence to the more widespread historical refusal of the middle classes to acknowledge that they are modelling themselves on stars or others in their peer group, that they are immune to identifications and construct themselves autonomously.<sup>16</sup> Texts aimed at audiences of women, like the fashioning and habits of women, themselves are demonised if they refuse to construct or represent themselves as within a recognisable and yet elitist frame that denies ingenuous pleasures in fashioning femininity.<sup>17</sup>

This research suggests that such routinised demonisation should be addressed and challenged by feminists, not merely through reiteration of mantras that ultimately reinscribe Modernist taste but through methods that creatively and productively examine the motors, pleasures and potential of forms of femininity.<sup>18</sup>

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excesses. In an article entitled, 'Choosing the right dress to impress' the writer lists the 'Top 10 blunders': "Great, you've finally decided what to wear to the graduate fair. So don't go and spoil your whole look by committing one of the following image blunders: Avoid: Scuffed shoes, bitten fingernails, torn tights, unkempt hair, tottering high heels, glittering jewellery, overdone makeup, stubble, overpowering aftershave or perfume and that all time favourite, food stains" (*The Guardian*, 16 June, 2001). The remoteness of art and design cultural capital from the majority has been discussed by Painter and others who have called into question the social function of art: "If by 'art' we mean 'fine art' – the art of the art world as I have defined it – the simple answer is that it seems to have very little to offer to the majority of people. The available evidence indicates that most people in Britain take little interest in world of fine art and, if attendance at art exhibitions is taken as an indicator, the minority that does attend to contemporary fine art is from the middle classes". (Painter, undated)

<sup>15</sup> Wilson has demonstrated the disingenuousness of such a standpoint. In his review of *Bohemian's* Hodkinson notes "Wilson emphasises the respects in which the bohemian dream could become artificial, shallow and pretentious. Even before 1900, café owners in Paris would pay dishevelled, bearded types to play chess in the windows of their establishments. This attracted tourists" (Wilson cited in Hodkinson, 2000, p. 63).

<sup>16</sup> This trait is evident in the editing and content of high and low brow media texts. The (masculinised, Modernist) broadsheet format ostensibly eschews star representations whilst the (feminised, excessive) so-called gossip and women's magazines freely associate stars with 'looks', 'problems' and 'issues'. Fawcett reads the Modernist inspired high fashion industry of the 1960s as presenting to her as a young consumer, the possibility of fashioning "uniqueness and difference" a much sought-after social distinction, but concedes, "you had to travel to London, and know where to shop to buy it" (Fawcett 2002, p. 123).

<sup>17</sup> Cox (following Sara Thornton) has provided one of an array of aspects of contemporary culture where this process is at work: "Recent analysis of rave culture [...] has revealed a discontent among 'true' ravers about the infiltration of what they term 'handbag house' and 'Techno Tracie's'. Real subculture is thus threatened by substandard (feminised) subculture which has no substance of its own and which can only crudely imitate the authentic. Once again the denigration of the mainstream is expressed most easily and succinctly by an attack on white trash woman" (Cox, 2000, p. 9).

<sup>18</sup> In this respect I feel that this was one of feminism's lost opportunities bearing in mind the paradigm-shift into post-modernity in art, design and architecture that was triggered by Robert Ventura's bold, unfashionable reflection on the 'low' vernacular architecture of Las Vegas (1977). I see lost potential too in the totalising view of beauty queens given the scope for theorising this field from the perspectives of the carnivalesque.



## Re. Fashioning feminism

For feminist scholars, confronting our own moralism and replacing it with acceptance has meant an extension of the horizon of our research [...] Wearing high culture blinders, we are unable to appreciate the strength of the allure, the richness of the fantasy, and the quality of the compensation, especially if our analysis consists only of finding new ways to describe the predictable mechanisms of patriarchal culture (Gaines, 1990, p. 6).

I have highlighted distinct dispositions and cultures that appeared to distinguish most of the research participants from the cultures of higher education, however, some, including myself had also experienced or represented alienation from the cultures of academic feminism.<sup>19</sup> Participants who defined feminists as ‘them’ generally demonstrated levels of indifference to feminism, whilst self-identified feminists expressed ambivalence concerning feminism and the terrain of taste and fashioning.<sup>20</sup> Cultural distinctions could be construed between the communities of non-feminist-identified women interviewed for this project, including some who *did* identify as feminists, and those academically endorsed standpoints representing feminism, articulated by those women who had crossed from the former to the latter. In language, histories and tastes, feminists and salon-goers were perceived by participants and myself as inhabiting different spaces with little prospect of meaningful dialogue or sharing of discourses in evidence.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In an episode interpreted as a further endorsement on my research journey I received this message from a colleague following our attendance at an international conference: “*And one other thing: I wanted to let you know that I really appreciated what you said in your talk about how “excessive” femininity is often discouraged within feminist circles. It made a lot of sense to me, in part because it reminded me of a former student of mine. She is brilliant and well-versed in feminist issues and theories, yet she doesn’t look the traditional part: she has very blonde, blonde hair and wears lots of make-up every day. I’ve thought a lot about my own reactions to her—I have to admit that when I first got to know her I found a sort of disconnect between her outward appearance and her intellect and feminist consciousness. As I’ve written letters of rec [sic] for her feminist jobs search, I’ve even wondered if I should talk to her about her appearance—not because it bothers me (I’m too busy analysing it to be bothered by it :) --but because I’m not entirely sure how potential feminist employers would receive her. Does that make sense? I realize the hypocrisy of this—how crazy it is for feminists to be trying to police how women appear—but I can’t entirely resolve it. Anyway, I’m not sure how she would feel about this (I’ve never talked to her about her appearance), but I wondered if you would be interested in corresponding with her as it seems quite relevant to your work.*” This ‘insider’ discussion seemed like evidence of sorts of how feminist dispositions can “*set limits on the value of embodied capital and therefore on the ability to move through social space and access other forms of capital*” (Skeggs, 2001 p. 304).

<sup>20</sup> I have already discussed the cultural remoteness of Dusty from feminist approbation, at least in the texts that mark the development of women’s music criticism.

<sup>21</sup> I return to this point later but an exception that hints at the possibilities for further research can be found in Angela McRobbie’s account of working in a hairdressing salon in Glasgow in the mid 1960s. The salon had provided a glimpse of an ‘exotic’ and glamorous ‘otherness’ that was in stark contrast to the narrowness presented by McRobbie’s strict Catholic upbringing. “*Now all I could do was to piece together the glimmerings of a different kind of life which had begun with the women whose heads I had washed*” (McRobbie, 1986, p. 17).

This distance between non/academic feminists on the grounds of taste and fashioning is rarely consciously acknowledged in feminist research, although this is alluded to in work by Walkerdine and Skeggs.



### **The fashioning space as a 'woman's space'**

The conceptualisation and provision of women's spaces, a Second-Wave feminist project that developed from the early 1970s in Britain diminished coincident with the rise of Conservatism in Britain from the early 1980s.<sup>22</sup> In some British urban contexts including Glasgow few feminist-created or sanctioned spaces were created.<sup>23</sup> However, like most towns and cities Glasgow has, in the post-war period, been home to many virtually 'women-only' non feminist identified spaces and places managed and frequented by women, where their experiences and histories are central, where many of their needs are met and where support, comfort and pleasures are dispensed and consumed. Salon cultures offered some hairdressers the skills and confidence to equip them for work as trainers, for academic life and in counselling.<sup>24</sup> The women's space constituted in working-class salons appeared to me uniquely primed for feminists to learn more about issues of relevance to working-class women, not least the meanings of fashioning, open up new discourses, built upon trust and levels of intimacy and confidentiality, offering up new initiatives and potential for activism on an array of relevant issues, a point I wish to return to later in this conclusion.<sup>25</sup>

Ellen's remarks about the specificity of space in the salon, where there was no hierarchical or inside/outside, public/private demarcations and where all aspects of the artifice of fashioning are literally mirrored, sheds light on the ways in which the salon can provide a unique sense for customers and hairdressers alike of a radically intimate environment. Participants spoke of a space where domestic and/or work routines were exchanged for tangibly different regimes, where; social consensus on the badness of vanity and pointlessness of fashioning was held at bay, fashion imperatives were not fore-grounded, where women shared intimacies where their use of artifice was not a cause for crisis or anxiety but rather, a shared reality made absolutely transparent to all those choosing to enter and participate, and where they felt comfort in the process of transformation. Accounts were frequently

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<sup>22</sup> As part of the Second-Wave feminist project to create the space for women to address their oppression and resist patriarchy 'women's spaces' proliferated in many European and American cities. Symbolic germinal projects like Womanhouse, an art project created by female students at CalArts, Los Angeles in 1971 under the supervision of Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro were followed later in the decade in Britain by women's groups and centres and single issue campaigning and crisis organisations like Women's Aid, Wages for Housework and Rape Crisis groups run on feminist principles. (For an excellent survey of Women's Liberation activities in Britain see Setch, 2000). As a feminist I have been involved in constructing and defending 'women's spaces' Co-founding Glasgow Women's Library, participating in two women's housing projects in the city, producing women's events, visiting women's projects and spaces internationally and being engaged in ongoing debates on the ethics and politics of women's spaces.

<sup>23</sup> A feminist run women's centre, broadly modelled on the template of women's organisations of the mid-1970s operated in Glasgow without revenue funding until the late 1980s. The first Glasgow Council Women's Unit Glasgow was not established until 1990 (and is now closed). The non-revenue-funded Glasgow Women's Library founded in 1991 remains the sole resource of its kind in Scotland.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, I noted that the routine salon appointment resembled the duration of a counselling session.

<sup>25</sup> In the context of feminist debate concerning the demise of women's studies (and Women's Units) and the turn from Women's to Gender and Queer Studies in Britain, the resilience of 'unofficial' or culturally disdained women's spaces such as salons I remembered noting with some irony in the research process.



characterised by the notion of routine rather than fashion. This was significant in the light of fashion's apparent synonymy with relentless progress.<sup>26</sup>

### Disdained and dissident fashioning practices: making up and artifice

The trope of artifice is inextricably bound to media representations of women, stars and the cosmetics and beauty industries and is ubiquitous in queered post-modern criticism and in feminist critiques of femininity. However, Ellen's feminist insight identified the salon space as a transparent fashioning environment.<sup>27</sup> The research participants who fashioned to excess were frank about the processes involved, indeed when asked, many women were happy if not enthusiastic to be photographed whilst 'work' was in progress.<sup>28</sup> Significantly none discussed fashioning with the stated aim of looking more beautiful, attractive or glamorous. In contrast, the rhetoric of both Modernist and feminist fashioning (there is 'less' of it, little is done, it speaks less and is less conscious of fashion and fashioning, it is closer to nature and truer to materials, it resists capitalism and rather, reflects high art principles) suggests that it is those who consciously construct a Modernist/feminist fashioning and reject the inevitability of our fashioning ourselves, who are prone to disingenuousness in this respect.

Following Dusty's launch as a solo artist, she was increasingly read in the popular press as a model of feminine excess, as a woman 'made-up'<sup>29</sup> but I would argue that, on the basis of participants accounts and the fact of her lesbianism, this was a making up of herself that problematised rather than

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<sup>26</sup>And fashion's perceived synonymy with capitalism and patriarchy are factors in feminism's antipathy towards it. Participants' fidelity to regimes and routines and loyalty to hairdressers and salons where they had experienced an appropriate ethics of care appeared to outweigh any external pressures applied by fashion industries. I acknowledge that older women's perspectives make up the majority of participant accounts and that may have impacted on these findings. Ellen raised a further point in her contributions that underscored the notion of the salon as a woman's space, developing the idea of this as an international phenomenon: "I'll tell you another funny thing was it 96, 94, Robbie and I went to Canada, he was 5 and he was needing his hair cut and the haircut he had then - he had a sort of pageboyey thing and my aunt in Canada, you would love her, she has got the piled up hair and the gold, she goes to Las Vegas twice a year and she had - she said, "We'll take him to my hairdressers." and I thought, ok, she has her hair done, she has it done twice a week, full shampoos and sets, so off we went to this hairdressers which was in Toronto and it was in this part of Toronto - we walked up the street past Longlaws or whatever and we found this hair salon and it was exactly the same as 'Linda's [her regular salon in Glasgow] do you know, it was that same set-up, women in overalls and not what you would imagine like across the Atlantic, obviously catering to that very, well I suppose there's quite a lot of Italian women that have that hairdo or whatever [...] but it was very much, very much a women's salon, a women's salon, you couldn't imagine a man being in there in a million years, my aunt would have her scarf on, I'm sure she wears her scarf going to bed you know, or if it's raining or whatever, she's got her rain mate and whatever which is strange because she's - well she must be well into her sixties now and she was a dancer when she was young and she wears these enormous high heels, I mean big, big, red, high heels..."

The exciting notion of the universality of specific forms of fashioning and 'women's spaces' requires further research. My paper on excess stimulated a discussion of examples of feminine excess at University of Murcia, Spain. Other international studies, including Furman's account of salons in New York, bears similarities to my findings.

<sup>27</sup> Thus concurring with Stern's contention that women who face the mirror to fashion themselves daily are absolutely aware of the process of artifice, they are not suffering from a false-consciousness about the reality of their bodies and are not deceived by appearances for this reason alone. In the light of the popularity of makeover shows, and the willingness of women in particular to go on them, any original will to deceive has surely evaporated.

<sup>28</sup> On the whole, participants confirmed Haug et al's concession that "*Learning a way of looking can be pleasurable*" (Haug et al, 1987, p. 169).

<sup>29</sup> Kuhn has written "*The naturalised order of gender difference rests on more than just the forms or styles of dress, on differences as it were in the content of clothing: it is a question of forms of relation to personal appearance more generally, to the entire realm of body adornment. Dressing up - like its cognate activities making up and doing one's hair - suggests a relation of fabrication, construction and production*" (Kuhn, 1995, p. 51).



produced an object for the male gaze. Dusty's voice and gestural self-fashioning were frequently narrativised in memories expand the possible identifications from the now routine formulations of gay male desire.

Across the three key chapters but significantly in 'Queening It' I identify how the elite taste for Modernism has impacted on the development of feminist fashioning and in contrast the cultures of disdain for working-class fashioning excess. Further findings that relate to disdained and dissident fashionings emerge from this chapter notably; that feminism has neglected the dissidence of feminine excess and homogenised fashioning practices as counter-revolutionary and that fashion innovation and invention coined in working-class and Black communities have been commodified by the taste-making elites. Cross-cultural fashioning instances are discussed throughout the thesis culminating in the iconic image in 'Queening It' of Missy Elliot's bejewelled ersatz aristocratic excesses that I link to arguably less knowing but nonetheless dissident and disdained appropriations of Royal Taste by white soap and other popular media queens.

## Identifications

This research claims that women's pleasurable identifications, where they impact on women's constructions of themselves and their domestic spaces, can arise through identifications with peers and strangers, between women of different ethnicities, ages and classes, as well as with stars and that these may be experienced as empowering.<sup>30</sup> Women suggested they were often aware of the consequences of their choices and their ability to differentiate other in/appropriate fashionings and were sometimes prepared to confront (patriarchal) authority figures in defence of their look. In Ettie's account of dyeing her daughter's hair purple evokes a synonymy with Rook's conceptualisation of the threat to authority of dissident hair:

Ettie: I went to the headmaster, I had an interview with him and he was complaining and saying he had said to her, "What does your mother say about that?" She said "It was my mother who did it". So when I went to him I said "Well she's not caused any trouble. If that's the worst thing

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<sup>30</sup> Although I acknowledge the work of Skeggs as significantly contributing to this and other studies on femininity and class, I did not find direct evidence in participant accounts that the social misrecognition of the feminine excess of working-class women "produced daily suffering, humiliation and pain" (Skeggs, 2001, p.304). Neither did I find evidence that working-class women crave respectability at all costs. Although many participants were aware of the imperative to fashion respectability, many chose to adopt dissident or excessive fashionings, on occasion identifying with music or film stars but also iconic peers and strangers. I acknowledge that given anonymity and privacy to record their own memory work texts different perspectives may have emerged. As an Adult Literacy and Numeracy tutor in a city where it is estimated that 1 in 6 of the population cannot interpret information on a standard poster I am also aware that for many women this method would be inappropriate.



she does - I did it because I wanted to control - not for her to come back from a salon burnt or tartan or psychedelic”.

Femininity can and does form an array of possible options for fashioning as Stern has argued. Participants in this research revealed no common, singular source or shared definition of what fashioning processes should or could entail. The significance of learning to fashion and its social importance, at least in the years leading up to adolescence, was largely determined in relationships with close family members and friends. Few participants cited texts as sources, Gabrielle was alone in remembering a specific reference. Hair fashioning was associated with or precipitated life changes and new identifications marking pre-school to school life, childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood, marriage to separation and independence and the subtle demarcations of adulthood and older age. Finding hairstylings that were appropriate was a complex sometimes traumatic or dissident activity freighted with social, parental and peer group expectations and women were assisted or managed in this process by friends, relatives and hairdressers.

Women had drawn pleasures and inspiration from a range of figures in their self-fashioning histories including stars and iconic family members, even when, or perhaps because others viewed their fashionings as inappropriate, unfashionable or disreputable. Where participants discussed identifications I had no fears that they simply mistook or had relinquished their own identities. Their identifications, drawn as they were from an array of real, star and fantasy images were difficult to interpret as evidence of false-consciousness, a measure of lack of self-esteem or enslavement to fashion systems. Identifications seemed idiosyncratic, individuated and unpredictable.<sup>31</sup> The complexity of identifications in creating notions of their own self exceeded any model of capitulation to an individual ideal. Self-fashioning appeared overwhelmingly a social activity where recreating the fashioned self was often a pleasurable, routinised activity generated from the banal, physical reality of, for example, hair growth.

In feminist research on women, fashion, star systems and femininity forms of identification have been paradoxically central/marginal, significant/trivial. In ‘Fashioning Dusty’ I discussed how Dusty Springfield and her fans could be seen to have given rise to new forms of identification for women (as well as the gay men who have been seen as the predominant or most important fan base) that expand

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<sup>31</sup> And, as Zdatny has pointed out, even identifications with deeply disdained icons of feminine excess are unlikely to be fatally ‘counter-revolutionary’: *“It is worth remembering that it was precisely the ‘Barbie generation’ of young girls that launched the contemporary women’s movement”* (Zdatny, 1997, p. 383).



existing feminist research across the above territories. In the context of women's hair fashioning, the accounts of research participants suggested that identifications played no less a role in constructions of the fashioned self and offered further models for feminist enquiry. Where participants identified female stars other than Dusty in their accounts of desired hair/life models these ranged from barely remembered characters or personalities with unforgettable fashionings to deeply felt aspirational projections engendering iconic and narrative memories. Women's memories of Dusty and the development of bouffanting dissidence in the 1960s also expands upon Stacey's theories of the developing proximity of self-star identifications in the post-war period. Participants describe an *"increasingly interactive relationship between self image and star ideals"* (Stacey, 1994, p. 236). This, in the 1960s was facilitated by the proliferation of images, media, products and fashioning apparatus further enabling the processes whereby *"mimetic transformations became [an even more] imaginable possibility through consumption"* (Stacey, *ibid.*). In Dusty's own accounts and biography the iconic identifications with, first the 'sheer glamour' of Hollywood star fashionings consumed in the cinema are superseded by identifications with Motown stars and other *African American* women performers with whom an unimaginable identification and proximity is desired, sought and achieved.

Americanness and 'foreignness' identified by Stacey as agents for transformation for her respondents remain a powerful force in both the shaping of women's identifications and commodity consumption in this period.<sup>32</sup> This research also suggests that the fusing of Hollywood glamour with the reinvention of the House of Windsor expanded the array of excessively feminine identifications for women from the 1950s on.<sup>33</sup> Indeed in 'Queening It' I argue that, far from aspiring to the pared down Modernism promoted and modelled by the middle-class fashion cognoscenti, female working class stars and their audiences frequently identified with fairytale excesses and Royal Taste. I distinguish between the ironic *appropriations* of both vulgar and Royal excesses by post-punk fashionistas and the fantasy *identifications* of working-class and consumers for bridal/coronation excesses.

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<sup>32</sup> As Sandy and Ettie suggest, young hairdressers were unusually well equipped to experiment with and construct elaborate and glamorous star looks.

<sup>33</sup> I only have the scope to speculate in this thesis as to the impact of the Charles and Diana wedding in 1981 on the seven year old Victoria Adams, or the impact of the Coronation both in terms of Royal Taste and media spectacle on the twenty year old Goodyear. Some significant data exists in the patterns of identifications implied by the popularity of star/royal names for children born in the post-war period.



## Dis/identifications: mothers and daughters, Second and Third-Waves

Research participants discussed forms of cross-generational and sororial fashioning. Their accounts described the significant role of mothers and other female mentors in, for example; modelling forms of in/appropriate femininity, extracting vicarious pleasure from fashioning their children, demonstrating the therapeutic uses of cosmetic acts and policing girls' fashioning dissidence. Daughters' accounts detailed variously their horror, disinterest in and nostalgia for their mothers' fashioning regimes. Middle-class participants or those who identified as moving from a working-class to a middle-class dispositions tended to highlight the distance between their own and their mother's fashionings, in terms resembling the feminist indictments of the false consciousness of women who fashion to excess. They less frequently cited identifications between themselves and peers or iconic strangers.<sup>34</sup> Working-class identified participants more frequently emphasised their mirroring of their mother's or older female family mentor's tastes and fashioning regimes.<sup>35</sup>

These themes of mother/daughter dis/identifications I found mirrored in the debates, developing coincident with this research, on links and fissures between the Second, and incipient Third-Waves of feminism.<sup>36</sup> The Third-Wave Feminism conference (July, 2002) ambitiously sought to establish the trajectory of international feminism in the twenty-first century and reflect on the relationship between Waves. I want to refer briefly to the generational dis/identifications that characterise/d these debates before linking them to my findings. The term Matrophors was used by Henry to describe the metaphors of mothers and daughters found in a "*myriad genres of feminist discourse*".<sup>37</sup> In papers and discussions it was apparent that, like their precursors, so-called Third Wavers wished to differentiate themselves from their mothers who 'lacked'. Whilst emphasising the difference between Old and New, Henry suggested that the conceptualisation of feminist generations

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Jean and Michelle who only conceded when pressed that anyone had influenced their fashioning.

<sup>35</sup> This mirroring is critiqued and parodied in media texts, disdain for excessive stars and contemporary folk devils. For example, Aitkenhead's 'Moscow hookers' and the 'meretricious' Milanese matriarchs cited earlier. Mothers are frequently viewed as doubly guilty in fashioning excesses exemplified in the still oft-cited criticism 'mutton dressed as lamb'. Youthfulness was a key notion in participants' accounts of registrations of time, stasis and change, old and young hairstyles. I was surprised how often my own responses revealed my comfort with a stock response or 'fronts' that equated youthfulness as desirable or achievable through salon visits for example "*Everybody looks ten years younger than they actually say they are!*"

<sup>36</sup> In particular the debates, papers and discussions at the Third Wave Feminism, international conference, University of Exeter, Institute for Feminist Theory and Research, 23-25<sup>th</sup> July, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Henry claimed that Matrophors are almost always dyadic. The Third Wave, has been dubbed, as was the Second 'a daughters' movement'. In the germinal text *The Dialectic of Sex*, Firestone spoke of the Second Wave as 'rebellious daughters' Henry pointed out that feminists seem unable or unwilling to conceive things, waves, or in numbers over two. Marysia Zalewski speaking at the conference, indicted the Movement as a dysfunctional family and noted how frequently the concept of the family figures in the history of Women's Studies: 'Sisterhood is Powerful', 'Subversive Sisters' Women's Studies as the 'Poor sister.' and Rich's critique in 1981 of the institutionalised feminist academics as the dutiful daughters of patriarchy etc. Henry rejected the alternative, 'Wave' "*since the notion of generations has been mapped over it and has disabled the Wave metaphor*" and argued that the Second and Third movements operated on a familial 30 year model of generational birth. Zalewski, Henry and Steenbergen agreed that the drift from First to Second-Wave is conceived of as generational, this reflected what I perceived to be the conference consensus.



itself rejected the possibility of younger women who support 'Old Feminism' as well as "*papering over ideological differences*".<sup>38</sup> Illustrating the ideological and aesthetic gulf between Second/Third, Old/New, Candis Steenbergen, cited the "*demographics and ideological cohorts*" of the Third Wave to be found in *BUST* and *BITCH*, and embodied by anti-G8 summit activists including Cowgirls Against Capitalism, the Radical Cheerleaders, Riot Girrrrls and so forth.<sup>39</sup> The ownership of feminism by young women is a much-needed and positive aspect of recent discussions, but I was left disappointed that the theoretical debates surrounding past and present feminisms since, in significant ways it echoed the ambivalences in some participants' accounts of inter-generational dis/identifications. Differences were articulated through the language of fashioning and tastes for and against popular cultural forms, restating the dichotomy of the high cultural disdain for the popular versus a foregrounding of camp. Although I looked to the Third-Wave to advance the debates on fashioning femininity, the texts and modes of activism of the (academic) Third-Wavers appeared just as likely as their foremothers' to neglect the lived experiences of girls and women who 'do' feminine excess 'straight'. Excess was appropriated for performative purposes in ways that converged with the queered aesthetics of ersatz trailer trash. For all their stated plurality, and aesthetic distinction from the Second-Wave (mirroring the aspirant/middle-class participants from their working-class mothers) Third-Wavers nevertheless risk reproducing what Brunsdon has called the "*politically correct form of femininity... an almost eschatological stance in relation to conventional femininities*" (Brunsdon, 1991, p. 376).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> She claimed that the notion of generation is an homogenising term, a reductive image of feminism that locks women and ideas into an historical period. Following Diana Fuss's work she claimed that a refused identity (that of Second-Wave 'mothers') is one that one has already considered a disavowed identity, and only by refusing can young women claim an identity of their own. In support of this she cited Ann Snitow's comments that Second-Wave, white, middle-class US feminists feared recognising themselves in their mother's life. This produced a desire to escape a recognition/ identification/ and led to disrecognition/disidentification.

In wider debates on the Third-Wave, Phyllis Chesler's controversial *Letters to a young feminist* (2000) was an oft-cited text. Chesler has called for Third-Wavers to learn from their elders whilst conceding that women of the Second-Wave had viewed themselves as matricidal, 'motherless daughters'. Like Third-Wavers, they were largely the same age when they became active. They were, peers, 'sisters' and sibling rivals.

<sup>39</sup> Steenbergen, another self-identified Third-Waver noted "intergenerational conflict" between the Second and Third-Waves. Her polemical address was persuasive: The First-Wave established women as persons, the Second-Wave established rights for women and the Third-Wave must end patriarchy. However, the self-consciously media and IT savvy profile of the Third-Wave was critiqued by so-called Old feminists at the conference on the grounds of its proximity to (superficial) pop culture.

<sup>40</sup> I am struck by the totalising nature of the queered project that is now, almost inevitably the flavour of the Third-Wave. (For a Glasgow model see the work of the Frock On collective). In playing with the kitsch signifiers of femininity Third-Wavers come close to repudiating womanness, and like, Tyler, paradoxically suggesting that only men have the agency to un/do the masquerade: "*Style is the wo/man: there is no authentic, "real" self beyond or before the process of social construction. Playing the gender role so as to hold it at a distance foregrounds the fact that it is a role rather than nature... To be a mimic according to Irigaray is to "assume the feminine role deliberately... so as to make 'visible' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible. To play the feminine is to 'speak' it ironically, to italicise it, in Nancy Miller's words; to hyperbolise it, in Mary Ann Doane's words; or to parody it as Mary Russo and Linda Kaufman describe it.*" (Tyler, 1991, p. 53). Henry identified herself as a young champion of Old Feminism, thus occupying the alternative position in this particular forum of the Third-Wave. Reflecting on participants' commentaries and self-identifications and rather than propose a further, homogenising type, I suggest that Michelle's identifications, both feminist and feminine are illustrative of the real, heterogeneous complexity of individual dispositions, as yet unaccounted for in the schema of the Third-Wave: Michelle rejected her mother's feminist conscious non-fashioning and credited her grandmother's bouffanted and high-heeled excess as providing a pleasurable iconic point of identification. She adopted her mothers' feminist politics but rejected the feminist policing of her fashioning by her and whilst working in a feminist organisation. She acknowledged the contingency and



## Women's false consciousness versus feminist pride

At intervals in researching this field I was struck by the lack of non-pejorative terms to describe looks that were fashioned to excess.<sup>41</sup> Although I was pleased that participants felt able to discuss their fashioning routines with some degree of pride, the rhetoric of women's vanity is still an over-determined characteristic of contemporary media reflecting widespread social disapprobation. Labouring on fashioning is still persistently viewed as mindless absorption in 'idiotic rituals'. (Greer, 1981, p. 61). In a culture that privileges the appearance of natural youthful unadorned beauty, degrees of excess elicit exponential degrees of disdain.<sup>42</sup>

Salon-goers' accounts of their fashioning routines and my observations of non-stop activity in the field confirmed Stacey's claim that femininity is "*an effect that has to be worked hard to (be) achiev[ed]*" (Stacey, 1994, p. 9).<sup>43</sup> What is routinely absent from the critiques of excessive femininity is an acknowledgement of fashioning as an often-public *process*.<sup>44</sup> Many participants appeared to enjoy the processes of transformation, their often well-trodden routes to the denouement, and enjoyed the context of the salon where others were at work on their own refashioning.<sup>45</sup> For some women, taking pleasure in such activities contradicted strongly held social and parental proscriptions. For Elizabeth, Jean and others, fashioning pleasures were charged with vanity, a wilful rejection of health, cleanliness and respectability.<sup>46</sup> Participants were still being required to abandon specific looks because they were too young or too old. Nevertheless, these accounts of pleasurable moments, routines and memories

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constructedness of her own history of fashioning and cited her own and her mother's non-fashioning and hippy identity as within a sequence of consciously selected and enthusiastically enacted episodes of 'dressing up'. Her feminist femininity was expressed in other diverse and idiosyncratic ways: a will to adorn, sororial and collective pleasures in fashioning, a political critique of the fashion industries, pleasures in the female gaze and her conscious self-objectification, a rejection of the male gaze and her consequent development of strategies of 'dressing up/down', a desire for feminine excess but without recourse to irony. If at all, Michelle and other self-identified feminist participants for example Sandy and Elizabeth, are embodying (albeit unfashionable) Third-Wave position/s - fashioning feminist femininity without queered parentheses.

<sup>41</sup> The paucity of non-pejorative terms for excessive femininity was reiterated in dialogue with participants who offered few further definitions: 'triggered up', 'glammed up', 'gallus' and 'fashioned'.

<sup>42</sup> Expressed by some participants, for example, Gabrielle's disdain of the women who used too much hair lacquer.

<sup>43</sup> This is embodied in the iconographic impact of Dusty, Elizabeth Taylor, Julie Goodyear and other excessive stars. I would argue that the queered notion of diva-dom is synonymous with female vanity.

<sup>44</sup> The classed nature of salons suggests that the more expensive the more privacy clients are accorded.

<sup>45</sup> Sharma and Black have found that in the field of beauty therapy it was the desire to "*feel rather look better that motivated therapists and clients*" (Sharma and Black, 2001, p. 913). My own most memorable hair fashioning experience was at the Afro-Caribbean salon, The Pink Ribbon. After years of feminist-inspired refusal to style my hair I had extensions. I found the experience personally and politically profoundly affecting. I was aware of the significance of my own white body in the context of the Black salon environment but was made to feel more at home than in any other fashioning context. I was told to bring sandwiches since the process took over six hours during which time I experienced the pleasures of music, warmth, the conversations and jokes of hairdressers, customers and passers-by and the exaggerated formula of transformation, described by Gabrielle and others, of watching a transformation of self, in this case from a woman with mousey, thin, short hair – from fear, to despair, - into someone (Oh joy!) with dark, waist length braided hair.

<sup>46</sup> For Elizabeth for example "*it was the worst crime in the world to be vain to be proud of yourself to be proud of your achievements and to be proud of your looks you know*".



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## Abbreviations

K. = knit, P. = purl, st. = stitch, sl. = slip, P.S.S.O. = pass slipped stitch over, tog. = together, rept. = repeat, rem. = remaining, cont. = continue, MY = main yarn, C1 = first contrast, C2 = second contrast, t.b.l. = through back of loops.

## Stitches used

st. st. = stocking stitch — knit 1 row, purl 1 row.  
g. st. = garter stitch — knit every row.

## Tension

9 sts. and 12 rows to 2" square using double knitting pure wool and no. 5 needles over st. st.

## Materials

400 grams main yarn (Navy)  
50 grams C1 (Burgundy)  
50 grams C2 (Grey)

One pair no. 6, and one pair no. 5 needles. Spare needles.

## Sizes

To fit small (medium, large) chest — up to 34" (38", 42") chest (loose fitting design!!!).

## Back

Cast on 79 (85, 91) sts. with no. 6 needles and MY.  
Row 1 K. 2, \* P 1, K 1, Rept. rept. from \* to last st., K 1.  
Row 2 \* K 1, P 1, rept. from \* to last st., K 1.  
Rept. these 2 rows till work measures 2", finishing with 2nd row.  
Change to no. 5 needles.  
Work 66 rows in st. st.  
Work Women's Border

Work 2 rows C1 in g. st.  
Cont. in st. st. — work 2 rows C2.

1. \* K 3 C2, K 1 C1, K 2 C2 \* rept. from \* to last st., K 1 C2.
2. \* P 3 C2, P 1 C1, P 2 C2 \* rept. from \* to last st., P 1 C2.
3. \* K 1 C2, K 5 C1 \*, rept. from \* to last st., K 1 C2.
4. As 2nd row.
5. As 1st row.
6. \* P 2 C2, P 3 C1, P 1 C2 \* rept. from \* to last st., P 1 C2.
7. \* K 1 C2, K 1 C1, K 3 C2, K 1 C1 \* rept. from \* to last st., K 1 C2.
8. \* P 1 C2, P 1 C1, P 3 C2, P 1 C1 \* rept. from \* to

last st., P 1 C2.

9. As 7th row.

10. As 6th row.

Work 2 rows in C2.

Work 2 rows g. st. in C1.

Cont. in MY, work 48 (56, 56) rows in st. st.

Next row Cast off 26 (28, 30) sts., K. to end.

Next row Cast off 26 (28, 30) sts., P. to end.

Break off yarn — leave rem. sts. on spare needle for back neck.

## Front

Cast on and work as for back till end of rib.

Inexperienced knitters knit 66 rows st. st. and omit pockets.

Experienced knitters only: Work 12 rows st. st., then

## Divide for pockets

Next row K 10 (12, 14) sts., turn. Cast on 25 (25, 27) sts.  
Cont. on these 35 (37, 41)

28 Spare Rib



linked to (hair) fashioning suggested that women had developed strategies to rationalise notions of vanity in order to facilitate their pleasures.

Although Michelle provided a political case (however equivocal) endorsing pleasure in self-fashioning to excess, it is Sandy's pleasurable memory of her epiphanic transformation into a lesbian feminist that stands as the only account of fashioning a form of femininity that can be read as manifestly requiring no political justification. As when she had fashioned to excess this was an act requiring effort, a form of identification, the consumption of new garments and accessories, undertaken with at least a degree of interest in attracting the gaze of others but for lesbian/feminist readers her account would be recognised as an expression of *pride* and not *vanity*, an acceptable form in the spectrum of femininities, a telling exception to the rules of the prohibitor:

Everyone had short hair and it was like belonging, a sense of belonging and I changed my appearance probably quite dramatically but I loved it. It was a choice, you know very short hair and very sort of plain to what I'd been before and how, you know, but it was a sense of belonging, but also that it was OK to just be how you were, you know.

### **Fantasies of non-fashioning**

This engagement with issues of fashion and female representation continues as a theme in popular and academic feminism throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s [...] Radical feminists, and indeed some of their more liberal 'sisters', abandoned cosmetics and adopted either dungarees and 'earth shoes' or other types of dress, which in their eclecticism removed them from the terrain of mainstream fashion (Fawcett, 2002, p. 125).

Bourdieu's description of the process of interrogating taste enables an effective analysis of both the fashioning of feminine excess and feminism as two "*apparently incommensurable 'choices'*" (but equally constructed dispositions), reflecting the Kantian 'taste of sense' and the 'taste of reflection' respectively. Whereas there was little to distinguish feminists' taste from the mainstream at the start of the Second-Wave as I have discussed, the first decade or so saw the diversification of feminist fashion into a form of middle-class "*pleasure purified of pleasure*". However, few forms entirely avoid fashion as the pages of *Spare Rib* illustrate. These texts reveal the effects of fashion and commodification and the spuriousness of feminist aims to create timeless, rational dress.



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Issue 75, October 1978, page 33.

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Issue 47.

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Issue 89, December 1979.



There is no intrinsic link between fashioning tastes, (for example, fashioning to excess, feminist fashioning or fashioning according to the Modernist belief that 'less is more') and democracy.<sup>47</sup> The *Rib* collectives' standpoints on plurality, inferred in the ubiquitous promotion of Inca products and Ragged Robin unisex freedom suits' are ultimately undermined by the valorising of white, Modernist fashionings of feminism modelled by cover stars such as Michelle Shocked and Naomi Wolf who determined the taste of *Spare Rib* and British feminism into the 1990s<sup>48</sup>.

Significantly *Rib* came to promote a lifestyle, a disposition, a species of habitus as structured and structuring as all others. The commodification and fashions of feminism can be charted in the product promotion that proliferated in the wake of the success of feminist clothing and jewellery lines to include feminist calendars, diaries, holidays, cafes, vibrators and even 2CV's alongside books, music and other media.<sup>49</sup>

In the April 1977 issue of *Rib* I discovered a curious but illuminating article that concluded an 11-page report on the Women's Liberation conference at the City of London Polytechnic in April of that year. I read this as endorsing my efforts to explore the constructedness of feminist fashioning, and I feel that it is appropriate to reproduce it here as a coda to my critique of feminist taste. The author's remarks are somewhat tongue in cheek and attempt a degree of self-reflexivity but indict the contemporary and historical ambitions and limitations of the Movement *vis-a-vis* fashioning.

Well ladies what you have all been waiting for! What was everyone wearing at the conference? Well as one might have imagined, badly cut trousers and quiet shades of blue brown and grey were almost *de rigueur*. There were exceptions of course, a few sisters were still clinging to the Indian/Afghan styles of a few years back, a few in shabby dresses or dirndl skirts but not many. There were a very small number of women who were smartly dressed (including one astonishing lady in knee-length tweed coat and flesh coloured stockings who seemed unaware of the askance glances she was getting from her sisters). But of course these were 'older' women, so it was understandable.

Within the trouser ranks, ill fitting jeans tended to be chosen by those ladies with large hips, and the close fitting sexier kind by those sisters who don't mind getting thrush. Dungarees as one

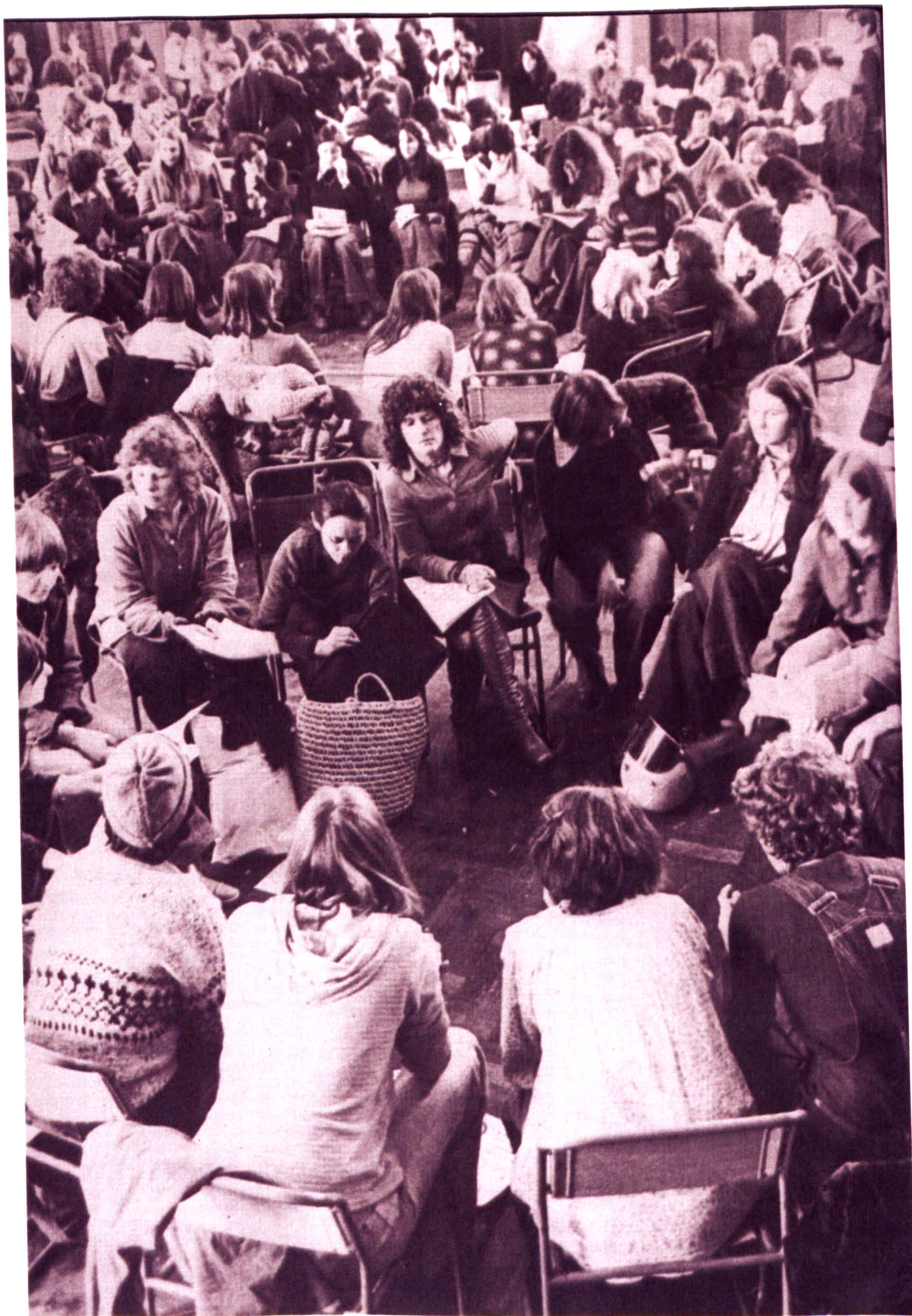
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<sup>47</sup> The falsity of Modernist claims that Modern forms follow function is perhaps most succinctly illustrated by the fact that sans serif, the typeface associated with the Bauhaus and much immediate post-war Modern design, is more difficult to read than cursive, more decorative fonts, a point I was first made aware of by design historian, Juliet Kinchin.

<sup>48</sup> Significantly, the subsequent rise in visibility of Women of Colour, editorially and as cover stars in *Rib* and the visibility of more excessive fashionings, for example, Margi Clarke's controversial make-up and earrings in Issue 166, May 1986, is linked to its demise by some of its critics.

<sup>49</sup> The feminist industries are still widespread and their initiatives have also been widely appropriated by other green, spiritual and lesbian business territories. A significant showcase exists at the The Michigan Womyn's festival. This is currently the most ambitious form of international radical market (akin to the similarly gentrified and commodified Glastonbury Festival), where an array of feminist and womyn's lifestyle products and services are promoted.





76. Women attending the Women's Liberation conference, London, 1977 in *Spare Rib*, May, 1977, Issue 58, page 14.



might have expected were even more in evidence than last year. Jumble sale clothes were everywhere! Ranging from a pink (unironed) bed jacket to neat little 30s dresses and Victorian jackets.

Accessories? Canvas shoulder bags, especially the authentic green Chinese variety predominated. There were – let me assure you – no shopping bags or standard handbags and very few suitcases. A smattering of sisters wore a smattering of make up, and silver or steel ‘political’ jewellery was the rule. Three or four badges seemed an appropriate number to be wearing (if one was wearing any this year) and walking boots and running shoes were everywhere on the floor.

All in all ladies, it was amazing to see how this concourse of women of all ages, classes, races and creeds (of course they were weren’t they?) looked so similar. It’s a tribute to our dress sense isn’t it? Let us give thanks, and wonder why our mother/factory workers/ typists/OAP’s don’t join us?<sup>50</sup>

### Contemporary contexts

This research has been developed in local and national contexts where camp views of femininity have proliferated against a backdrop of high cultural disdain for tastes in femininity and fashioning excesses. For example, during the research period a plethora of British theatre productions, TV programmes and feature films set in hairdressing salons were launched.<sup>51</sup> Somewhat predictably, these were either examples of the appropriation and misrepresentation of working-class culture for middle-class audiences and/or further evidence of the queering of feminine excess into a camp trope where (gay) men provide the narrative focus. It is hard to recognise anything of the participants’ accounts of salon life in them.<sup>52</sup> Whilst *Cutting It* is one of a genre of self-consciously camp TV vehicles to be developed in recent years, *Salon Janette*, the nostalgic, sing along ‘hit musical comedy’ about a group of bouffanted hairdressers in Glasgow unwittingly drew a camp audience to its Scottish

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<sup>50</sup> (*Spare Rib*, May 1977, no. 58, unattributed, p. 15) Dissenting voices were recorded in *Rib*. The conference report included comments from a representative of the Teesside Women’s Action Group who stated: “We did not feel free to express ourselves as we really are. One sister said she was tempted to go in disguise, knowing that the clothes she usually wears would be out of place, because like all Women’s Liberation conferences we felt we were entering another world” (ibid. p. 7).

<sup>51</sup> For example, the feature films *Blow Dry*, *The Big Tease*, the local theatre hit *Salon Janette*, and TV series *Cutting It*, *Having it off* and *Something for the weekend?*, *Chewin’ the Fat* have featured a salon sketch, an Afro salon features as a key setting for the series *Babyfather*, and, more recently a Reality TV series *The Salon* has been launched. The majority draw on the vogue for camp, for example, The BBC’s *Having it off* is “Set in the Eccles hairdressing salon of Guy La Trousse, [...] First it was Frances Barber in the starring role of nymphomaniac April, tonight it is Stephanie Beacham popping up as Guy’s mum” (*Observer*, 18 July, 2002). Both Ettie and Sandy had suggested in their interviews that the world of salons were ripe for dramatisation. Ettie: You could write - you could do a play, a sixties play.

<sup>52</sup> Although some participants defined the hairdressing experience as non-competitive at least two narratives culminated in a competition where women’s vanity and competitiveness is fore-grounded (for example, in the *The Big Tease* and *Cutting It* where hairdressers compete for awards, and *The Salon* where the staff were recruited via a *Pop Idol* type elimination format in Programme 1, January, 2003). An absolute exception exists in the documentary *Three Salons at the Seaside* that provided a counterpart to Stacey’s *Stargazing* as a touchstone for this project (Lowthorpe, 1994). Film critic Richard Jobson has suggested that salon-based productions are inherently trivial “There is [...] one area where cinema seems determined to re-use clichés, feast on double entendres and revel in silly characters. We are talking about the world of the hairdresser” (Jobson, 2001, p. 6).



run, making it an unintentional cult hit, a la Rocky Horror Show.<sup>53</sup> In the light of this mythologizing of the salon, and appropriation of forms of fashioning to excess more broadly, the possibilities as Sandy suggested, for a feminist intervention either critically or creatively have been pressing but as yet not forthcoming. Recent media and fictional representations of the world of hairdressing have grown exponentially with the market for texts with a camp, queered perspective. In contrast, very little research has been undertaken on the value/s for customers and staff of such services in Britain.

In the real beauty and hair industries new initiatives suggest that that cultural and economic polarisation is being intensified. By the end of 2003, 5000 new digital screens will have been installed in up-market salons "*from Taunton to Edinburgh*" (Jones, 2003) enabling the promotion of short films by British independent filmmakers, boosting the cultural capital of aspiring clients whilst obviating the need for interaction between hairdressers and their customers.

My concerns about cultural justice, fashioning and taste have a wider resonance. The rhetoric that polices and disdains excess is at work in the political and cultural landscape and reflected in the built environment.<sup>54</sup> In Glasgow, cultural idiosyncrasies, detail and the decorative, are being rapidly replaced by a form of International (post) Modernist inspired, mock stealth wealthy, unadorned uniformity. The Broomielaw, the city centre Clydeside, scandalously makeover post 1990 as a result of an apparent pact between developers, councillors and arsonists is now a corporate desert. The Merchant City buoyed by the escalating markets for Modernist loft dwellings and city-centre apartments is now improbably spreading down Trongate and towards the East, the escalating land values now threatening the Barrowlands (Barras) itself. Pressure to close the Barras has been increased through the demonisation of the Barras stallholders.<sup>55</sup> The benefits of replacing independent local with global retailing is self-evident, the first Scottish Selfridges will open on the Trongate in 2004. Landmarks like

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<sup>53</sup> "We suddenly discovered folk sitting in the audience with Sixties gear on" said star Mary Riggans" (unattributed, *Glasgow* magazine, 2001, p. 25). *Cutting It* forms part of a new genre along with *Footballers Wives* and the relaunched *Crossroads*, marking the final incorporation of camp into middle-class, MOR mainstream TV viewer-speak: "*Bad Girls and Footballers Wives have played to the gay gallery while keeping themselves successfully rooted in the mainstream*" (Smith, 2003, p. 24-25).

<sup>54</sup> One might argue that excess and taste has played a significant role in the post-war international political arena. During the writing of this thesis the Anglo-American war against Iraq was waged. An inordinate weight was placed by the British media on the vulgarity and excessive tastelessness of Saddam Hussein, the conclusive evidence of a deranged despot. The looting of Hussein's ornate palaces and the literal overhaul of his gilt statue were accorded huge symbolic significance in Western coverage of the war. The indictment of Saddam's aesthetic excesses was of course in no way compared to the decadence or Royal Taste of the Windsors. Lewis mined the theme of a taste for decorative and realist excess as a sign of mad egoism in his profile of Ceaucescu (Lewis, 2003). Hitler has similarly been psychopathologised, his madness and grotesque crimes linked to his failures as artist, his misguided tastes for romanticism, sentiment and realism in art and, most significantly, as the great opposer of Modernism.

<sup>55</sup> The Barrowlands is arguably the principal site for memories of collective working-class pleasures and the display and consumption of excess in Glasgow. With its huge elaborate Vegas-style neon façade it houses a market and a former ballroom, now a venue for bands. It is flanked by independent jewellers and Celtic supporter's bars. In the course of this research I met architect Louise Urquhart, whose family, the McIvers, still own the Barras. She highlighted the tremendous and increasing pressure being applied to the family through an intensification of police raids on stallholders and unfavourable reports in the local press citing council and police criticism. They are currently considering closure.



the Barrowlands, and to a lesser extent salons like 'La Paris' inject the excessive allure of Americanness and Foreignness and forms of Royal Taste to specific sites in the City. The council appears only to feel shame. It is perhaps for many a personal repudiation of working-class histories.

The destruction of working-class cultural centres, including the women's spaces I have visited, has consequences for feminist research projects that extend beyond the frame of fashioning. The exchange of intimacies discussed as commonplace by participants in this study, a process built upon stratas of trust, intimacies and loyalties has been viewed in some American contexts as having a unique role in tackling abuse and violence against women. In several states, cosmetologists including hairdressers and beauticians are being encouraged to spot the signs of physical abuse and "*ask the appropriate questions*".<sup>56</sup> But, rather than suggesting that working-class salon-users are fixed here as 'survivors' I would like to suggest that facets of non-academic feminism can illuminate research and feminist knowledge and provide models that change our ideas about femininity, feminism and gender.<sup>57</sup>

Being a beneficiary of its emancipatory potential myself, I acknowledge the paradigm shifting agency of feminisms Old and New in re-constructing identities, opening up routes to self-determination for women, politicising generations of women and radicalising academia, not least in campaigning for both women and popular culture and fashioning to become serious subjects for academic research. Anticipating the Third-Wave makes reflecting on and critiquing the Movement's ambiguous engagement in politics of fashioning in the Second-Wave imperative. This thesis is an attempt to add to knowledge by suggesting that feminist fashioning is but one form within the spectrum of femininity that is equally constructed, that women's pleasurable consumption of music is under theorised but that

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<sup>56</sup> Sarah Roe states that "*Government officials in America have realised that cosmetologists – a term that includes hairdressers and beauticians – could be a vital link to encourage women and children who suffer domestic violence to come forward. Last year a training programme was established in the state of Nevada to teach hairdressers to spot the signs of physical abuse and to ask the appropriate questions. [...] Under the scheme 150 stylists and 1300 salons were sent an information pack. [...] Similar projects have been established in Connecticut, Colorado, Idaho and Wisconsin.*" Discussing this initiative with Scots hairdressers Roe notes that there is similar understanding of intimacies and issues, Roe quotes Edinburgh hairdresser Gordon Wilson who states, "*I have done some of my clients for three weddings – their hairdresser has outlasted two husbands. You do get very close to them. I suppose we are in a unique position.*" His salon, has already worked with a local GP to be able to spot common health problems and he "*feels additional training on domestic abuse would be the logical move*" (Roe, 2001, p. 15). There is clearly scope for the expansion of this potentially radical initiative, for example, training salon staff in 'spotting and referring' women who may want to develop their literacies, introducing lifelong learning initiatives into salon spaces, conducting oral histories, developing awareness of welfare rights, employment rights etc...

<sup>57</sup> I have found this point illustrated in other recent research with working-class women. For example, although Fawcett has suggested that the 1960s offered a more liberatory milieu for fashion and femininity in her critique of the excessive femininity on display in contemporary Newcastle streets, she concedes a subversive, gallus element in contemporary, excessive fashioning, a trend she otherwise regards as an assault on feminism and liberatory Modernism: "*Interestingly, there is a seeming lack of inhibition about size amongst some young women in the city. Girls interviewed were very concerned with their bodies, and expressed anxieties about body shape but some who were larger than the desirable ideal wore the same revealing clothing as their peers. In the self-scrutinising culture of the 1960s, there were unspoken rules about who should wear the micro-skirt, and fat legs were to be disguised or covered up but in Newcastle in 1999 the return of the micro skirt and the crop top was seemingly embraced by all, and this has to be seen on one level as a subversive element in what is predominantly a highly stereotypical scenario of female appearance*" (Fawcett, 2002, p. 138). She also notes, "*Given the seductive nature of female dress, there is less emphasis on 'scoring' than there was 20-30 years ago, when girls danced round their handbags in dancehalls and clubs on a Saturday night and the evening was a failure if no one walked them home*" (ibid. p.133).



it can positively impact on women's fashionings and identifications, and that there are significant questions in accounts of taste and class still to be answered regarding feminism and femininity. I also claim in this thesis that in the post-war period it has been the working classes and Black and minority ethnic communities who have germinated dissident, bohemian fashionings, it is the 'Outsider' Dubuffetian subjects who are the (anonymous) authors of troubling, radical work and it is the middle classes who have capitalised upon it.

Women's self-fashioning is arguably the most paradoxical of all gendered activities engendering an array of psychoanalytic, social, cultural and aesthetic interpretations and experiences. The recent vogue for 'queering' forms of feminine excess, and the ongoing denial of the possibility of feminist agency of women who choose this form of self-fashioning, contributes to the mainstream neglect of pleasures and uses of femininity by women. The accounts of research participants in this study indicate that such experiences cannot be reductively and theoretically discounted.

Whilst it is critical that the ongoing misogynous lampooning of both femininity and 'feminist style' be challenged, in so-called high and low cultures, the complex social, historical and cultural currency of 'feminist fashioning', its ambivalent links with Modernist taste and antipathy to and consequent neglect of feminine excess justifies a longer look in the mirror by those of us engaged in cultural research.

The feminist fiction of the "*other woman*" (Hollows 2000, p. 17) has inhibited the participation of many women in the feminist movement and stymied discourses, discussions and disagreements in feminism whilst relinquishing the debates on fashioning and freedom to the enemies of feminism, caricatures and the disappointingly white, male-dominated realm of queer culture. Feminists have the prerogative, indeed the responsibility to be reflexive and critical about all aspects of feminist knowledge. At the advent of the Third-Wave, feminists have the opportunity to reposition, reengage and rearticulate our attitudes towards the ways feminism may be embodied and to overhaul systems, which perpetuate cultural injustices on the grounds of appropriate or inappropriate fashionings. It is the disdain for the 'other woman', not the taste for femininity, or the will to adorn, that should be trashed.



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## Appendix i      Table of research participants

<b>Names</b>	<b>Interview date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
'Ann'	18 <sup>th</sup> October 1999	Sarti's cafe	Ann is in her mid-forties. She is currently running her own consultancy business with a woman partner. She trained as a hairdresser and helped initiate Glasgow's first beauty therapy course. She has also worked at a Glasgow Burns hospital where she headed a team of cosmologists.
'Cheryl'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Cheryl is a 1st year trainee hairdresser. She is in her mid -thirties and works regularly with customer Maureen.
'Claire'	28 <sup>th</sup> August 2000	Café, Edinburgh	Claire works for a voluntary organisation in Edinburgh. She is in her early forties and identifies as from a middle-class family and is a feminist. She has written a book on incest and also writes occasional pieces for local newspapers on Dusty Springfield.
'Eileen'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	La Paris salon	Eileen is a salon regular, having been every week for over twenty years. She is in her late fifties.
'Ellen'	14 <sup>th</sup> December 2000	Glasgow Film Theatre Cafe	Ellen is in her early forties. She is a technician in a Glasgow-based Higher Education institute. She identified herself as born into a working-class family. She lives with her young son and her mother. She attended college to study photography in the 1970s.
'Elizabeth'	12 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> December, 2000	My home	Elizabeth is a retired teacher in her late fifties. She still teaches part-time at a sixth form college. She has one sister. She enjoys all aspects of the arts and likes to keep fit. She is divorced, has one daughter and lives alone.
'Ettie'	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2000	Leonardo's restaurant.	Ettie is in her sixties and lives with her husband and son. She has five other older children. She has a strong Catholic faith. She worked as a hairdresser for more than thirty years and now does this work voluntarily for a Christian homeless project.
'Eva'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Eva is a trainee beauty therapist at Northend College (Year 2) During our meeting she was taking on the role of a customer in order for Sue to practise her aromatherapy facial massaging techniques.
'Evelyn'	21 <sup>st</sup> December 1999	Her mother, Ettie's home	Evelyn is in her late thirties. She facilitated my meeting with her mother and was present at intervals in our discussions.
'Francine'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	'Cutz' salon	Francine was an architecture student in her mid-twenties from Botswana who chose to work for free at the salon for social reasons.
'Gabrielle'	21 <sup>st</sup> December 1999	Her home	Gabrielle is in her late seventies. She has been married for over fifty years and has three children, two sons and a daughter, Evelyn who was present at intervals during our meeting. She lives in a council house with her husband and both have disabilities that impact on their mobility. Gabrielle has lived in the same area for most of her adult life. She chose the name Gabrielle because this was her mother's name.
'Irene'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	La Paris	Irene is the senior hairdresser at the salon. She is in her late forties.
'Jackie'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	'Cutz' salon	Jackie was a customer at 'Cutz' in her late twenties



			who was interviewed whilst having her hair extended by Francine. This was her third visit for this work to be undertaken.
'Janey'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Janey is in her late 60s. She is a widow. She has been attending Northend to have her hair fashioned for several years. She enjoys country music, playing the piano, dressmaking and knitting. She has a daughter and a granddaughter.
'Jean'	7 <sup>th</sup> February 2000	The House for an Art Lover café	Jean is in her late forties. She is a lesbian and lives with her partner. She is a driving instructor.
'Jenny'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	La Paris	Jenny, in her early 60s is a regular at the salon and had formally been a regular at another local salon. She had worked at Glasgow University until her retirement as a dishwasher.
'Jo'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Jo is in her late 20s. She had been having her hair cut at Northend for more than a year and Pauline was her regular hairdresser.
'Kathy'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Kathy, in her late 20s is a trainee hairdresser at Northend.
'Maureen'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Maureen is in her late 40s. She is married and has a young son. She enjoys nightclubbing and her husband sometimes managed to use his job as a bouncer to gain them access to gigs and clubs. She has been going to Northend for over a year.
'Michelle'	9th March 2000	Caffe Latte	Michelle is in her mid twenties. She is sociology student at a Glasgow Higher Education institute. She is a self-identified socialist and feminist. She is currently identifying postgraduate research opportunities. She works in a voluntary capacity for a women's organisation that is committed to oppose violence against women. Her first choice for a pseudonym was 'Posh' as she 'loves' Victoria Beckham's style.
'Mrs. Lohead'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	La Paris salon	Mrs. Lohead is in her early eighties. She lives in a wealthy area of Glasgow, is married and has two daughters. She enjoys theatre and the arts and likes to keep fit.
'Mrs. Martin'	10 <sup>th</sup> January 1998	La Paris salon	Mrs. Martin, in her early sixties is the manager of 'La Paris'. She is still involved in hair fashioning in the salon.
'Pam'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Pam, a customer at Northend is in her early thirties.
'Pauline'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Pauline is a trainee hairdresser. She had formally left hairdressing to bring up her children. She enjoyed drama and was due to play Marilyn Monroe at the College Christmas event for the second year running.
'Sandy'	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 1999	My home	Sandy is in her late forties. She is currently a counsellor but trained and worked as a hairdresser for many years from school age. She is a lesbian and lives with her partner and son. She identifies herself as a feminist from a working class background. She returned to education as a mature student to study psychology.
'Sue'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Sue is in her early twenties. She is a trainee beauty therapist at Northend (Year 2).
'Yvonne'	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2000	Northend College	Yvonne is a trainee beauty therapist at Northend College. She is in her late teens.



## Appendix ii      Letter sent to gatekeeper at 'La Paris' salon, January, 1998

Home address:    72 Davaar,  
                         421 Blythwood Court,  
                         Anderston,  
                         Glasgow,  
                         G2 7PA  
Tel:                0585 909409

Mrs. Martin,  
Manager,  
'La Paris' hairdressers,  
255 Marytown Road,  
Marytown,  
Glasgow,

1. 1. 98

Dear Mrs. Martin,

My name is Adele Patrick. I am a part-time tutor at the Glasgow School of Art and I am researching for a PhD at Strathclyde University. I rang before Christmas requesting your help in research I am currently conducting on the pleasures women take in transforming their appearance. One of the ways that I think women do take pleasure is in having their hair styled at the hairdressers! Although this may seem an obvious claim to make, in my studies I have found that this is an area that has been neglected by social science researchers. Rather than simply working on my own (positive) assumptions about what women might gain from the experience of visiting the hairdresser, I would like to include the views of women who visit them regularly. As a first step I wanted to conduct a short piece of work on two well-used and long-standing Glasgow hairdressers. For a number of years have passed 'La Paris' hairdressers on the Marytown bus-route and, apart from being a noticeable landmark, it has always seemed a busy, local business. It would seem to be an ideal site for this initial short study. I would be very grateful if you could accommodate my request. I will telephone early next week to answer any specific questions you may have, and hopefully arrange a date and time for my visit, but in the meantime I have jotted down some notes to give you an idea of who I would like to speak to, how I intend to work and how the interview material will be used.

### *Who do I want to speak to?*

I would like to interview one 'regular' (while she is having her hair done, or while she is waiting to be seen, while she is under the dryer, or at a time convenient to you, the other employees and her. It is fine for me if other people contribute to the conversation as they might do normally. ) Ideally the interviewee would be someone who has a lot of work done on her hair, and perhaps someone who enjoys her visits. Of course, it would be great to interview someone who likes talking!

### *What do I intend to do?*

If you and the interviewee have no objections to this, I intend to tape-record an interview with a customer for no more than an hour (perhaps through the duration of her having her hair done?) I do not intend to fire questions, or make my interviewee or anyone else in the salon feel uncomfortable. My intention is to be as little in the way as possible and to have an informal conversation with the interviewee. The interviewee will direct the focus of the interview. The few questions I have prepared include: e.g. *Do you feel different before, during and after your visit to the hairdresser? Have you ever asked to have your hair done to resemble a famous person or star?* and so on, but these questions may not need to be used if the interviewee directs the conversation in other directions. If you and the interviewee have no objections, I intend to document the meeting with a few photographs. Copies of all material gathered, tapes and photographs will be made for the interviewee and yourself.



***How will the interview material be used?***

The interview data will be used as part of my PhD thesis. The aims of this project are to provide a positive analysis of women's pleasures and tastes in dress, hair and use of make-up and jewellery. The name of the interviewee will be changed unless they specify otherwise and your salon name too can be changed in my report if you so wish. Similarly the interviewee and yourself can decide whether the photographic documentation can be used by me in my thesis. I hope that the research will help to broaden the debate on women, glamour, taste and beauty. Transcribed copies of the interview can also be copied and sent to you if you wish.

I am very grateful for your help so far and I hope that my work won't inconvenience you too much. I will ring at the start of the week in the hope that an interview visit can take place soon after (perhaps the weekend of the 10<sup>th</sup> January, if you are not too busy and there is an appointment scheduled with at women who you feel might be happy to be interviewed?) I am happy to answer any questions you may have. I look forward to meeting with you soon and I wish you a very happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Adele Patrick, MA

P.S For your interest, my PhD supervisor at Strathclyde University is Dr. Katie Grant who is based in the Modern Languages Department, Livingstone Tower, Richmond Street, Glasgow.